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STUDIES IN THE INFLUENCE OF THE CLASSICS ON ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY
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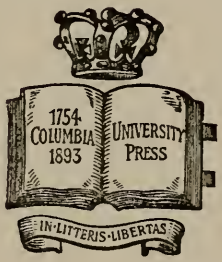

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PREFACE

For the student of literature there are few more interesting or difficult questions than, What have the Greeks meant to the moderns? A general answer may be easy, for the influence of the classics has been far-reaching and pervasive, but it is not easy to find a precise and adequate description of the vital aid English literature has received and is still receiving from the poetry of antiquity.

Mrs. Goldmark's death interrupted an investigation into this problem that offered much promise. She came to Columbia to continue studies that had already led her to an intense interest in the relations of the literatures of Greece and England, and she carried on this work at first with Professors Fletcher and Trent in their courses on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and later in my seminar on the Victorian period. The dissertation which she planned was to offer studies in representative poets of different epochs and thus to illustrate some of the changes in the modern understanding and appreciation of the Greek spirit. As she proceeded, this plan grew more definite, and took in some measure the form of a thesis which asserted for the

Greek tradition a closer continuity than has always been granted by those who insist on breaking English literature into periods and movements.

With Bentley early in the eighteenth century there was established a sound basis of Greek scholarship, on which, Mrs. Goldmark felt, was built most of our subsequent appreciation and imitation. She was inclined to shade the sharp generalizations that the Queen Anne classicism was mainly Latin and that the revival of Greek influence came with the Romanticists. From Bentley, and possibly even from Ben Jonson to the present, she found the Greek temper differently interpreted, but always alive in English poetry and rarely independent of a thorough grounding in the Greek language.

In the papers included in this volume there will be found only slight hints of this synthetic view. Unfortunately Mrs. Goldmark's notes on the writers of the eighteenth century proved to be very incomplete and represented an early stage of her investigation. There was no paper on Gray, who manifestly would have been an important figure in her book. It is a matter of regret to those of us who had watched her work that the papers presented give little indication either of her extended research or her constructive criticism.

Those, however, who care to study the response of the modern imagination to Greek thought and

act will turn gladly to the few essays that remain to represent Mrs. Goldmark's long searching. In her acute analysis and sympathetic appreciation will be found the fresh estimates of a student who loved what she studied. To the Greeks she comes with an ardor and a balance of mind not unworthy their approval.

Mrs. Goldmark's life had more than one devotion, and a teacher is not the one to estimate its meaning and richness. I should like, however, to record how much I feel it means for our country to have women of her ability show a devotion to scholarship and literature. Mrs. Goldmark will be remembered at Columbia among the many women who along with other loyalties and duties give brave service to those of scholarship.

Ashley H. Thorndike.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ruth Ingersoll Goldmark was born June 7, 1885, on her father's farm, at Wickliffe, Ohio, about twelve miles east of Cleveland. The father, George Lyman Ingersoll, was a direct descendant of Jonathan Edwards in the fourth generation. He was the publisher of one of the first newspapers in the state of Ohio, and a lawyer in excellent standing. The mother, Cornelia Howard Sanders, was related to the Bradford, Converse, and other New England families. Both the paternal and maternal grandfathers were Congregational ministers, and both parents were Presbyterians. Her mother and sister were her first teachers. Then she attended the district school and the high school in Mentor, the Painesville High School, and finished her preparation for college in the preparatory department of Lake Erie College of Painesville, Ohio.

She graduated from Lake Erie College in 1906, having given special attention to her studies in Greek and in Philosophy. For two years she was teacher of English at Glendale College near Cincinnati, and was for two years a graduate student at Wellesley College, holding fellowships in the

English Literature Department, and receiving the M.A. degree in 1911. The following year she was instructor in English and registrar of William Smith College at Hobart College, Geneva, N.Y., and from 1912 to 1914 was Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature at William Smith College. In 1914 she received the fellowship of the Woman's Education Association of Boston for study for the Ph.D. Degree at Oxford. The war, however, prevented her from going abroad, and she pursued her studies at Columbia University. In 1915 she was appointed a Curtis University Scholar in Comparative Literature at Columbia, but declined this and returned to Wellesley to carry on work on her thesis there.

She was married February 12, 1916, to Mr. Charles J. Goldmark, and continued the preparation of her thesis at Columbia in 1916 and 1917, up to the time of her death. She died on October 13, 1917, leaving an infant son, who bears the name of Jonathan Edwards Goldmark, in honor of his distinguished ancestor.

FELIX ADLER.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CLASSICS ON BEN JONSON

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade of the sixteenth century the situation of English drama was the despair of many conscientious students of ancient dramatic law. The minds of such men George Whetstone expressed a few years earlier in his prologue to *Promos and Cassandra*, when he deplored the "tryfels of yonge, unadvised and rash witted wryters," who had discredited the advised methods of ancient poetry. "The Englishman in this qualitie," he declared, "is most vaine, indiscreete and out of order: he first groundes his worke on impossibilities: then in three howers, runnes he throwe the world: marryes: gets children, makes children men, men to conquer kingdomes, murder monsters, and bringeth Gods from Heaven and fetcheth divels from Hel."[1] This is not an exaggerated description of the average dramatic output of the two preceding decades of the sixteenth century. The scholarly translations of the Inns of Court and two generations of college

[1] J. Nichols, edition of Six Old Plays. London, 1779.

drama faithful to classic models and but too faithful to classic language had not achieved force sufficient to penetrate the world of the drama at large. In these two communities of culture the reproduction of Old Roman plays, or the writing of plays modeled upon the Latin, was a favorite diversion. This was so far such a purely scholastic exercise that in the hundred years' course of college dramas there was not a comedy written which excelled that of the pioneer of school drama, Nicholas Udall. So, until the end of the century, comedy was left to pursue her native English course, partaking of the nature of interlude or romance, but not conforming to literary precedent.

The barbaric translations of Seneca given to the world in 1581 received far more popular attention than Roman comedy. The cultivation of Seneca by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple was hardly enough to account for the prevalence of this tragic manner. It was peculiarly congenial to the taste of the public at the moment, and immeasurably reinforced by the genius of Kyd and Marlowe. What the average tragic writer of their time derived from Seneca, however, was insignificant, beyond a license for horror and endless rant, a few ideas of compass of play and chorus, and devices of ghost and tyrant. Whatever uncertainty there may be about the direct indebtedness of these popular

writers to Seneca is intensified by their remoteness from the spirit and letter of classic law.

When the full day of Elizabeth's reign arrived, other triumphs than those of unschooled art were prepared. From the universities came men with the background of humanistic studies, endowed with wit and with poetic talents instinct with the beautiful or the sublime. With the advent of these and of Shakespeare, the London stage won to its new standard all necessary to make it complete but the constructive critic. Such a man was not only required to supplement the artistic completeness of Elizabethan drama, but to serve lesser writers with education in fundamental form. So, unmistakably the man for his time was Ben Jonson, in no respect more "rare" than in his erudition. His intellectual grasp is known to have comprehended even the subtlest knowledge of his times and much mediaeval lore, but it is impressive to consider only his classic learning. The first of English poets, with the wealth of Greece as well as Rome at his command, he has not, in periods especially animated by the Greek spirit, been surpassed for the profoundness of his literary acquaintance. Others have exhibited more intimate knowledge and delight; but Jonson in his day stood alone in his championship and first in his conscious theory of art based upon scholarship.

While a catalogue of Jonson's Greek and Latin reading would fill line after line, the story of his educational advantages can be briefly told. All quality and inspiration in his early training may safely be attributed by Jonson's own grateful acknowledgment to the famous second master of Westminster School, "the most learned, and my honored friend, Master Camden,"[1] to whom *Every Man in his Humor* was dedicated. Under his instruction was laid the foundation of vast and exact translation. The jottings of idle moments, contained in the *Discoveries*, are a revelation of the range at Jonson's command. Incidental anecdote or authority quoted in this memorandum laid under contribution not only the masterpieces of poetry, philosophy, and oratory, but more obscure grammarians, sophists, and historians.[2] With his vigorous scholarship and naturally retentive memory, Jonson could scarcely be surpassed for the richness of his quotation and allusion. He says of his own faculty in the *Discoveries:*

"Seneca, the father, the rhetorician, confesseth of himself, he had a miraculous one (memoria): not

[1] Dedication of *Every Man in his Humor*, vol. 1, p. 1. All references in this paper to the works of Ben Jonson are from the Gifford-Cunningham editions. Chatto & Windus, 1904. 3 vols.

[2] E.g., De Progres. Picturae, v. 111, p. 409: Thersites Homeri, Ulysses Homeri, etc., p. 394. Ode XLVI, p. 310.

only to receive, but to hold. I myself could in my youth, have repeated all that ever I wrote and so continued till I was past forty: since it is much decayed in me. Yet I can repeat whole books that I have read and poems of some selected friend which I have liked to charge my memory with."[1] Jonson's lines are accordingly full of the wisdom of the ancients. The processes of their art he understood not only from a general intimacy with classic masterpieces, but from a studious comparison of Greek and Latin theories of art, with their literary practice. Moreover, Ben Jonson was an energetic man of the Elizabethan world, as well as a scholar. He therefore applied these classic laws to his own drama and vigorously recommended them to the stage at large: "*Non nimium credendum antiquitati.* — I know nothing can conduce more to letters than to examine the writings of the ancients, and not to rest in their sole authority or take all upon trust from them. — It is true they opened the gates, and made the way that went before us: but as guides, not commanders."

The loss of Jonson's commentary upon Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Art of Poetry*, in the fire that invaded his study, has deprived us of his own account of himself as an exponent of the classical influence. He would there have told us with

[1] *Discoveries:* Works of Ben Jonson, vol. III, p. 396.

characteristic exhaustiveness how thoroughly imbued he was with the structural principles of Attic Comedy;[1] how congenial to the satirical spirit of the great Aristophanes; how learnedly he revived the men and manners of ancient Rome, giving his drama the truly aphoristic spirit of Seneca. Jonson was quite capable of writing a just estimate of himself and has indeed in his incidental verse and repeatedly in his dramas defined his position, but not so fully that a satisfactory classification of his plays according to their classic traits is unmistakably clear. Beyond certain conformities of structure one must be guided more or less by one's individual sense of the dominant spirit of his plays.

The dramatic works of Ben Jonson to my mind fall into four groups of classic association. The motif, characters, and diverting spirit of the first group suggest his indebtedness to New Comedy. This class includes his five masterpieces: *Every Man in his Humor*, *Volpone*, *The Silent Woman*, *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and the product of less happy genius, *The Magnetic Lady*. The second group is that of comedies of allegory and satire, suggesting the dominant influence of Aristophanes. To this class *The Staple of News* obviously belongs; and in their spirit and influence, not in their concrete conceptions, *The Devil is an*

[1] *Discoveries:* Works of Ben Jonson, vol. III, p. 391.

Ass, Cynthia's Revels, The Poetaster, Every Man out of his Humor, and *The Tale of a Tub. Sejanus* and *Catiline* constitute the group of Senecan tragedy. The fourth group includes those plays which are a departure from his established tragic or comic style. An experiment in deference to contemporary influence was made early and late in Jonson's career by two romantic comedies, *The Case is Altered* and *The New Inn.* Only in the additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* did Jonson essay romantic tragedy. The mysterious pastoral drama, *The Sad Shepherd,* completes the list of Jonson's plays produced during various phases of the history of drama in the reign of Elizabeth and James.

Before discussing the first group, I should like to review briefly the characteristics of New Comedy and the theory of Greek comic art which Jonson derived from Aristotle. The Greek critic really says very little about comedy in *The Poetics,* but the reinforcement of comments in his other writings assures us that the practice of Menander was Aristotle's ideal of comedy.[1] The history of comedy in the two stages after Aristophanes was that of progressive approach to the serene domestic sphere of life; of character delineation moving from classes

[1] The following estimate of Aristotle's theory of comedy is based upon Butcher's translation and his criticisms of the *Poetics,* pp. 367–387.

to individuals; of refined execution of plot resulting in perfect unity of action. The principle which Aristotle outlined in his *Poetics* was the essential withdrawal of comedy from the sterner issues of life. On that account he repudiated Aristophanes. True comedy has no end but diversion; seriousness which expresses itself in dogma or satire is therefore alien to it. "Homer," said Aristotle, "first laid down the lines of comedy by dramatizing the ludicrous instead of writing personal satire as the lampooners did. *The ludicrous consists in some device or ugliness which is not painful or destructive.*"[1] When distinguishing between tragedy and comedy Aristotle said comedy aims at representing men as worse, tragedy as better, than they are. *Hence characterization in true comedy sets off the foibles and imperfections of men.* The interplay of foibles should be so infused with the spirit of mirth that the spectator may be led to hearty laughter, not to loathing of roguery. Aristotle seems to imply that the names of the personages should suggest the characterization. Middle and New Comedy evidently employed type names. Plautus was much more apt to use names etymologically significant than otherwise.[2] When character is thus predetermined by one attribute, and moral significance

[1] *Poetics*, I–V paragraphs, Butcher's trans.

[2] Butcher, p. 377.

is removed, the limitations of action must be recognized. Such a minute cross-section of play, unrelated to the great categories of life, must consistently lie within the compass of a few hours and attempt no range of action that cannot be rounded and complete in that time. Since the unity of comedy cannot consist in spiritual ends, every dramatic device must be concentrated on plot to give it artificial sequence.

II. JONSON'S COMEDIES OF FIRST GROUP

These are the principles, therefore, that should test the first group of Jonson's comedies. He does not leave us in doubt as to the convictions with which he set about to present his first masterpiece. Having surveyed the confusion of dramatic types on the London stage, he resolved to serve the world with the fruit of his classic studies. The prologue to *Every Man in his Humor* expresses in verse what George Whetstone's quaint English declared: first, that which a play should not be and was: second, the character true realistic comedy should have.[1] That he had the imitation of classic methods in mind is so evident from the structure of the play itself that it does not need the emphasis of the dedication to Master Camden, of whom Jonson learned "All that I am in the Arts, all that I know."[2] For

[1] Vol. 1, p. 2.

[2] Vol. III, *Underwoods*.

faithfulness to the spirit and law of New Comedy, *Every Man in his Humor* must, however, divide honors with *The Silent Woman*. The latter play I wish to describe more fully as a basis of comparison.

The first setting forth of persons in *The Silent Woman* is a conversation of two young gentlemen, Clerimont and Truewit, on the latest sensation of society, "a new foundation, sir, here in the town, of ladies that call themselves collegiates . . . and give entertainment to all the wits and braveries of the time."[1] These two youths cannot be long together, however, without thinking of their comrade Dauphine Eugenie. Clerimont has not seen him for three days, but has heard that he is very melancholy.

"Truewit. Sick of the uncle, is he? I met that stiff piece of formality, his uncle, yesterday, with a huge turban of nightcaps on his head, buckled over his ears.

"Clerimont. O, that's his custom when he walks abroad. He can endure no noise, man."[2]

Their further conversation enlarges on the torturing experiences of this most afflicted man, and further serves to introduce uncle and nephew. True to the plot anticipation, Dauphine makes his appearance and explains his melancholy. His uncle,

[1] *Silent Woman*, I, 1, p. 406 (vol. 1).
[2] *Ibid.*, I, 1, p. 408 (vol. 1).

it seems, has employed agents all over England to find a silent, nay, even dumb woman, and has succeeded in finding a lady perfectly adapted to his purpose, residing in the house of Sir John Daw, neighboring. This means the disinheritance of Dauphine. After Truewit has parted from Dauphine and Clerimont, the latter changes the topic to speak of the dinner to take place at the house of Sir Amorous La Foole. Clerimont's clever description of La Foole sets off his habits just at the moment before the very man in question enters the stage. The feast, Sir Amorous says, is to be at Tom Otter's, and various ladies are to attend. The attraction which has induced My Lady Haughty and Lady Centaure to attend Sir Amorous at dinner is the opportunity to be there afforded, of seeing the silent gentlewoman, Mistress Epicoene. The first act closes with their expectation of a veritable feast of wine and mirth. The spectator is now prepared for the disclosure of Morose and Epicoene. The diverting figure of Morose, thus far reserved, now appears in conversation with Mute, the well-trained servant who answers his master by gesture. Suddenly Truewit stamps into Morose's room with excruciating clamor of horn.

"Morose. O men! O manners! was there ever such impudence? . . . Whose knave are you?

"TRUEWIT. Mine own knave and your compeer, sir."[1]

Having established his rights by force of personality, Truewit proceeds to declare, proclaim, bawl, his forebodings that Morose will rue marriage. Thence he betakes himself to Sir John Daw's literary salon to tell Dauphine what a clever thing he has done for him by forbidding his uncle's marriage with Epicoene. The next instant the barber enters to announce that Truewit's visit has had the opposite effect on Morose of making him resolve to marry immediately. Truewit is nowise daunted. "My genius is never false to me in these things,"[2] he says. Meanwhile Morose has sought a determining interview with Epicoene, and thoroughly satisfied with her "divine softness," closes negotiations for marriage. Cutbeard is dispatched for a silent minister to tie the knot.

The plot has now been worked up to a pleasing point of complication by the ingenuity of Dauphine, who alone understands the true drift of events. His position of instigator of action is triumphantly sealed. He gathers his friends — Truewit and Clerimont; Sir John Daw, "two yards of knighthood measured out by time to be sold to laughter";[3]

[1] *Silent Woman*, vol. 1, II, 1, p. 413.
[2] *Ibid.*, II, 2, p. 418, vol. I.
[3] *Ibid.*, II, 2, p. 419, vol. I; 4. p. 423. vol. I.

Captain Otter, "a great man at the Bear Garden," with his "princess"[1] wife; Sir Amorous La Foole, with a bouquet and the collegiate ladies in his wake. They advance upon Morose's house, where the revelation of noise has already begun from Epicoene herself. First comes Sir John Daw, announcing himself "your wife's servant, sir." "A Daw, and her servant, O 'tis decreed of me."[2] From this point the bombardment proceeds to the climax fittingly played in the person of Captain Otter.

"I have brought my bull, bear, and horse, in private, and yonder are the trumpeters without and the drum, gentlemen."[3] This assembling of the company with their concatenation of noises marks the height of action. Now is the time for Dauphine to begin the unraveling of the plot. He begins by suggesting to his inconsolable uncle that he secure a divorce from a wife whose "dowry are strife and tumult." It works admirably. As Dauphine says, "He has run out of doors in his nightcaps to talk with a casuist about his divorce."[4] But Truewit guarantees two very clever lawyers to talk with him in his own house. Dressing up Captain Otter and the barber in the gowns of legal

[1] *Silent Woman*, II, 4, p. 423, vol. I.
[2] *Ibid.*, III, 2, p. 431, vol. I.
[3] *Ibid.*, III, 2, p. 433, vol. I.
[4] *Ibid.*, IV, 2, p. 443, vol. I.

dignity, he dispatches them to Morose with Latin phrases to serve every turn. While they are transacting their business, Epicoene rushes in to forbid such an insult to a bride on her wedding day. This moment of Morose's deepest despair is the signal for the revelation of the plot. The culmination of Dauphine's designs is the instant when Morose is submissively ready to barter his legacy for liberation from unmerciful woman. The deed is no sooner signed than Dauphine electrifies the entire company by the announcement that Epicoene is a boy; the whole episode of marriage the device of his own cunning.

No play of Jonson's better illustrates Aristotle's laws of dramatic action. The Protasis is the introduction of the chief persons, accomplished by the conversation of Truewit and Clerimont. The Epitasis, worked out by the unwitting assistance of Truewit and by the success of Dauphine's long-laid schemes with the barber, realizes itself in Morose's decision to marry. The Catastasis, or height of action, is Morose's marriage consummated, and the attendant celebration uniting all the persons in action. The Catastrophe, in this play most admirably reserved till the final instant, and unanticipated though in the fullest degree natural, is the theme of lavish praise on the part of all critics. A simplicity of execution which would have delighted

Aristotle himself is obtained by placing the plot completely in the hands of Dauphine alone. All the contrivance, coming as it does from the mind of one man, tends to the single end. Such complete lucidity even Plautus did not always achieve, for it was often his habit to embody two or three plots of his master Menander or Philemon in one play, destroying the Greek singleness of idea by underplots. The compass of action is within a single neighborhood of London, during the busy hours of one day. Dryden reckons the time just three and a half hours.[1] Nothing is projected in the action that is not rounded and complete in the dénouement. Each person embodies a dominant passion about which all his conversation and action revolve. One knows exactly what is to be expected of him. This method, combined with the fashion of the significant names Morose, Truewit, Sir John Daw, and the others, fully realizes the theory of comic character Aristotle sketches in his *Poetics*, and what we believe the late Attic Comedy writers practiced.

Jonson's favorite method of character description is used without marring artistic effect in *The Silent Woman*. It introduces each person in the rising action, and by anticipating the coming interest weaves the plot with perfect grace. There are many merry "humors" which the student of

[1] Ker: *Dryden*, p. 83.

classic influence must perforce pass by, only to remark on their complete artistic harmony. Jonson was so rarely able to keep within "nonjudicial" bounds [1] that his success is particularly felicitous in *The Silent Woman.* The mirthful spirit which inspires all the characters and pervades these plays is the crowning achievement of Jonson's classic study. It was not imitation in any sense, for the foibles of the characters are inimitably English.

With the same spirit and ideals, Jonson conceived *Every Man in his Humor.* The dramatis personae of this play are more directly suggestive of Plautus than are those of *The Silent Woman.* Incorrigible Brainworm is nearer the social level of the intriguing servant of Plautus' drama than is the leisurely young English gentleman Dauphine in *Epicoene.* Yet the resemblance to Roman comedy is never more than one of general situation. Here is a son determined to get into bad company and a father equally determined to rescue him, continually frustrated by the clever servant who takes the side of the son.[2] Brainworm far surpasses the ingenuity of Roman Tranios by the wit and caprice of his disguises. There have been many to point out how exceedingly more humorous than the

[1] Woodbridge: *Studies in Jonson's Comedy,* p. 26.

[2] E.g., *Mostellaria.*

ponderous, greedy, boasting captains of Roman comedy is the grave bravado of the simple-minded Bobadil. To unravel the plot of this play Jonson employs his favorite device of the law,[1] not always bona fide, as *The Silent Woman* proves, but in this case genuine. *Every Man in his Humor* has the structural merits of *The Silent Woman* and its true comedy spirit.

Probably no play brought Jonson more fame in his own day, or indeed in later time, than *The Alchemist.* Shirley's praise would have delighted Jonson's heart had he lived to hear it.

> The Alchemist, a play for strength of wit,
> And true art, made to shame what hath been writ
> In former ages: I except no worth
> Of what or Greeks or Latins have brought forth:
> Is now to be presented to your ear
> For which I would each man were a Muse here
> To know, and in his soul be fit to be
> Judge of this master piece of comedy.[2]

For the third time Ben Jonson manipulated the incredulities of men, here with a power unequaled before, but not yet out of the true realm of comedy, for, as he says, "They are so natural follies."[3] Here he shows his knowledge of the occult lore of the times; moreover, he proves his power of char-

[1] Volpone: Mock trial, *Poetaster: Tale of the Tub.*
[2] Vol. I, p. cv.
[3] Vol. II, p. 4. Prologue to *Alchemist.*

acterization. The most impressive part of the play is his analysis of motives shrewdly distinguished among the idle scheming characters. *The Alchemist* has a framework of plot which is reminiscent of Plautus' *Mostellaria*. This slight borrowing is all but overshadowed by the originality of the plot in detail, but it is as follows. Lovewit, master of the house, has left his mansion during his absence in charge of his servant Face. This estimable knave, in complicity with Subtle, keeps the house very lively indeed with company of their own devising. It becomes conspicuous in the neighborhood that many come and go. While their schemes are in full swing and Mammons and Puritans alike betray their intelligence before the two clever frauds, Lovewit suddenly returns to his dwelling. The neighbors assure him there has been daily and nightly resort to the house, of people a motley sort: ladies and gentlewomen, citizens and sailors' wives, and knights in coaches. Lovewit's knocking does not bring Face to the door, but to the street by a circuitous route. He is most decorously attired in his butler's livery, and solemnly claims the house has been indefinitely shut up because a cat entered it who had the plague. The entrance of Surly and Mammon, however, spoils his lies. Similarly, in *Mostellaria*, Theuropides, having been absent for several years on business, returns home while his

son is having a revel in the house. The clever servant Tranio reaches the street by a roundabout way and tries to prevent his master from approaching the house by telling him it has been haunted by the ghost of a former owner and consequently deserted by his son. The whole fabric of his lies is destroyed by the entrance of the banker and neighbor. Mr. Hathaway notes[1] that Face's lies were made to stand time, while Tranio's could endure but a few hours at best. He also observes the very slight resemblance of the quarrel of Face and Subtle, Act I, scene 1, to that of Tranio and Grumio as a means of Protasis in *Mostellaria*. As Gifford notes,[2] Jonson may have had in mind the Punic jargon of Hanno in *Poenulus*, when he devised the scene in which Surly is introduced in the disguise of a Spaniard.

Volpone belongs to the same class as *Every Man in his Humor* and *The Silent Woman* because of its deftly handled intrigue. It cannot, however, bear the term Swinburne applied to *The Alchemist* — "aesthetically blameless masterpiece."[3] The Would-Be episodes are out of proportion to their importance in the plot. The fifth act carries on issues not

[1] *Alchemist*. Yale Studies in English. Introduction on sources. *Poenulus*, Act. 5, sc. 1.

[2] Vol. II, p. 54, note 1.

[3] Swinburne: *A Study of Ben Jonson*, pp. 43 ff.

embraced in the leading intention of the other four acts. In these, Mosca, like Brainworm, Face, and Dauphine, has the upper hand of action. Like theirs, the devices of his clever brain shape the plot. What had Jonson done in this play to make it necessary for him to depart from a perfectly artistic standard of structure? In the character of Volpone he had surpassed himself and at the same time violated the New Comedy ideals of characterization. There is nothing of Aristotle's meaning of *ludicrous* about Volpone. Here is a character so cynical, misanthropic, utterly sinister, that Symonds recognizes in him the "sensualities of Aretino, the craft of Machiavelli, the diabolical ingenuity of Italian despots." [1] The combination of his tyranny over men's motives, and Mosca's agile craft reaches a consummation at the end of the fourth Act intolerable to Jonson's moral sensibility. Having already destroyed the legitimate comedy of the piece by the triumph of this Satanic brute, he must rescue the truth of the drama. Therefore *Volpone* falls short of Aristotle's ideal through the imperfect bond of Act V with Acts I–IV; through the overshadowing evil of the Fox, and the consequent recourse to moral issues. For many sententious utterances in this drama, Jonson's ready memory of the classics drew upon Lucian, Horace, Martial, Juvenal, Anac-

[1] Symonds: *Ben Jonson*, p. 72.

reon, and even the obscure fragments of Greek drama. Volpone's greed is vividly and imaginatively conceived.

> Good morning to the day: and next my gold.
> Open the shrine that I may see my saint,
> Hail the world's soul and mine, etc.[1]

When the time came for Jonson to write *Bartholomew Fair*, while classic principles of structure had their habitual hold upon him, his keen English temper was stronger than the influence of the ancient beauty of restraint. The *universal* laughter of which Aristotle would have the poet mindful, and which was aroused by *The Alchemist*, *The Silent Woman*, and *Every Man in his Humor*, but faintly echoes through the scenes of *Bartholomew Fair*. Aristotle would have us distinguish between wit, which is mere discomfiture of persons, and humor, which dwells in cross-purposes. *Bartholomew Fair* is London uproarious with holiday humors. The most inimitable of them all is the portrait of Rabbi Busy, to which Symonds has done admirable justice.[2] Londoners, delighted with this frolic of their functionaries of law and religion, hailed the dramatist "Rare Ben Jonson." While this play is ranked with his best, it adds nothing new to Jonson's debt to the classics.

[1] *Volpone*, I, 1, p. 337, vol. 1.
[2] Symonds: *Ben Jonson*, pp. 111–121.

Less skill is displayed both in the plot of this play and in that of *The Magnetic Lady*. *Bartholomew Fair* proceeds largely by episodes to a dénouement not precisely inevitable. *The Magnetic Lady* after a vigorous start weakens toward the end. For some reason Jonson has seen fit to take us behind the scenes to the poet's shop, where we find him still working consciously with his classic laws. The first interlude runs thus:

"Boy: Now gentlemen, what censure you of our protasis or first act? . . .

"Damplay: But there is nothing done in it, or concluded: therefore I say no act.

"Boy: A fine piece of logic! do you look, Master Damplay, for conclusion in a protasis? I thought the law of comedy had reserved them to the catastrophe: and that the epitasis, as we are taught, and the catastasis had been intervening parts, to have been expected. But you would have them come together, it seems: the clock should strike five at once with the acts." [1]

From what follows in this interlude we perceive that Jonson, some twenty years after his first notable effort, is again anxious to protest against the vulgar violation of established dramatic law. The next interlude has another theme. There Jonson

[1] *Magnetic Lady*, I, 1, p. 402, vol. II.

is interested to impress the audience with the "solemn vice of interpretation that deforms the figure of many a fair scene by drawing it awry" . . . "as if there could not be a name for a folly fitted to the stage, but there must be a person in nature found to own it." [1] While the theme of the first interlude is justly maintained of *The Magnetic Lady* and defends his last comedy of harmonious structure, the subject of the second interlude takes us back to the stormy days of his unrestrained satirical triumphs.

III. COMEDIES OF SECOND GROUP: ALLEGORICAL AND SATIRICAL

We have seen that Jonson was capable of inspired dramatic achievement on classic lines of comedy. He studiously avowed and practiced the principles of New Comedy. The problem is to reconcile with this avowal his utterances concerning the didactic aims of drama and that other great group of his plays conceived in the spirit of allegory and satire. It is not fair to characterize him wholly by either of these ideals. He was at different times dominated by each, and they are as inexplicably inharmonious as is the whole fund of criticism we possess by this mysterious man. The spirit of reform was wholly alien to Plautus and Terence.

[1] *Magnetic Lady*, II, 2, p. 410, vol. II.

They aimed to amuse and drew, not contemporary Rome, but the Greek world of Menander. To find Jonson's classic association when he is in the mood of reform, we must go back in the history of ancient comedy to the time when the dramatist was profoundly concerned with social tendencies. In Aristophanes, Jonson was familiar with comedies satirizing the State. If his own active, fearless brain required any authority for English caricature, he might point to Euripides and Socrates lending themselves to satire on the pages of Aristophanes. Probably the work of the old comic poet exerted a powerful influence over Jonson during the writing of this satirical group of plays. Yet in only one of these can we lay hands on definite indebtedness, namely, the satirical conception of money in *The Staple of News*. In the others of this group Jonson was working out his own aims with aggressive originality.

Certain political events of Aristophanes' time, as well as the ever-present problem of the unjust distribution of wealth, conspired to create in the mind of the Greek poet the theme of his *Plutus*. It solves the question: "How is it that the ungodly are often seen in great prosperity while the righteous are needy and poor?" Because Wealth is blind, the poet answers, and cannot discriminate. So upon the scene where Chremylus is holding dialogue

with his shrewd slave Corio, appears a curious blind old man. He proves to be Wealth, sent by Phoebus in answer to Chremylus' prayers. Wealth confesses that he was blinded by Zeus. Yes, says Chremylus, so that the caprices of Money should keep the altar supplied with offerings. "Men sacrifice to Zeus for *Me*,"[1] exclaims Wealth, amazed. "They do," says Chremylus. "Every mortal thing subserves to Wealth. . . . Of all things else a man may have too much: of love: of loaves: of literature: of sweets: of honor . . . but no man has enough of thee."[2] This is all news to Wealth, and he vows that such irrational state of things is all due to his blindness. So Chremylus and Cario hustle him off to the temple of Asclepius. At this sanctuary he is amusingly healed and brought back in triumph to the house of Chremylus. In the meantime the news has been passed around that Wealth has come to reside with Chremylus, and the neighbors throng about with curiosity and — covetousness. The situation promises infinite satisfaction of life-long desires. A triumphal procession ensues to install Wealth in the Acropolis. The chorus is composed of Chremylus' husbandmen called from their work in the fields to share the spoils of their master.

With this allegory freshly in mind, Jonson set himself to the task of the moralist. In *The Staple*

[1] Rogers: *Plutus*, p. 17. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

of News, money figures as a woman, Lady Pecunia, whom it is the desire of Pennyboy Canter to have allied with his son. The will of the deceased father meets with the unreserved approbation of the son. Seeking out the lady, he carries her off in triumph to display her at The Staple Office, where he has been recently honored with a position. The theme of the satire, that men are wholly subservient to money, is carried out with keen delineation and humor in these scenes. Pennyboy junior deserts work and goes off on a debauch with Pecunia. It is revealed at the critical point that the father has all the time been alive, a witness of the scene, for the sake of testing his son.

This play evidently resembles the *Plutus* only in general conception. Pecunia herself is not only a woman but has an abstract escort, while Plutus is unattended. There is a little detail borrowed from another play of Aristophanes, *The Wasps*, namely, the trial of his dogs by Pennyboy senior in the last act. However diverting in detail, the whole play culminates with a moral fire which rings the knell of Plautus and Terence. The epilogue proclaims the paradox in Jonson's genius:

> Thus have you seen the maker's double scope,
> To profit and delight.[1]

[1] *Staple of News*, vol. II, p. 333.

The Devil is an Ass brings the unworthy servant to task in the same unmistakable tones. Swinburne criticizes it for an "incongruous combination of realistic satire with Aristophanic allegory."[1] There is too much human interest for allegory, he says, and not enough to give interest to satirical allegory. There are little devices borrowed from Plautus: Wittipol's disguise as a Spanish woman; the miserly motives of Fitzdottrel, who occasionally expresses himself in the very words of Euclid in *Aulularia*.[2] Said Tattle to Mirth concerning this play, in the first interlude of *The Staple of News:* "My husband, Timothy Tattle, God rest his poor soul, was wont to say, there was no play without a fool and a devil in it; he was for the devil still, God bless him! The devil for his money, would he say . . . was the Devil ever married, . . . The play will tell us that, says he, we'll go see it tomorrow, *The Devil is an Ass. He is an errant learned man that made it,* and can write, they say, and I am foully deceived but he can read, too."[3]

Between no successive plays of Jonson's is there a greater difference in art than between *Every Man in his Humor* and *Every Man out of his Humor.*

[1] Swinburne: *Studies in Ben Jonson,* p. 65.

[2] *Staple of News,* III, 1, Speech beginning, "You hear, Devil, lock the doors fast, and let no one in, . . . nor turn the key on any neighbor's need." III, 4.

[3] *Ibid.,* I, 2. p. 289. vol. II.

The latter is almost a complete reversal of the ideals of the first play. The license which he took to haunt his scenes with critical comments on the play, furnished by the pedantic conversation of Nietis and Cardatus, is quite as mistaken as the excesses of the despised romanticists. The induction, beside containing all of Jonson's doctrine of humors, has an inappropriate history of the development of comedy. The succeeding interludes are so unpardonably self-conscious that the dramatist looms irritably before the spectator in the words of Fastidious:

"Why do you see, sir, they say I am fantastical: why true, I know it and I pursue my humor still, in contempt of this censorious age." [1]

Instead of two censors, as in *Every Man out of His Humor*, almost the entire *dramatis personae* perform that function in *Cynthia's Revels* and *The Poetaster*. Action is wholly subservient to the exposition of satire or humor. These plays represent in the extreme his abandonment of structural laws. Yet like Aristophanes he caricatured the literary tendencies of his time. Aristophanes however, for purposes of witty realism, named the poets in *The Frogs*, and though he quoted their unmistakable tricks of speech, he generalized each character. "Aristophanes' characters are not fairly judged if

[1] *Every Man out of His Humor*, III, 1, p. 101, vol. I.

they are thought of merely as historical individuals subject to caricature. Cleon, Socrates, Euripides, represent certain movements in philosophy, politics, and poetry."[1] There is no warrant to suppose that Jonson drew actual persons except in those scenes in *The Poetaster* where Marston's vocabulary is severely ridiculed. Like Aristophanes, his concern was with the trend of the times. In these plays he took occasion to satirize a good deal of social life as well as the execrable literature of his popular fellow-dramatists. Yet Aristophanes was never guilty of posing himself in such insufferable self-righteousness as Jonson in Crites and Horace. Any student of the classics must protest against this perversion of the Roman poet. While praising their literary merit, Swinburne's last word on these two plays is a "dramatic sacrifice."

IV. JONSON'S TRAGEDIES

Here, with passing notice of the spirit of caricature incarnate in *The Tale of a Tub*, closes the list of Jonson's plays which imply a sympathetic study on Jonson's part of the first phase of Attic comedy. Turning aside from the problems of London, Jonson directed his attention to historical studies in tragedy. In this field of drama he transferred his authority from Greek to Latin. From his letter to readers,

[1] Butcher: Arist. *Poetics*, pp. 367–387.

prefixed to *Sejanus*,[1] I take it he wisely felt that an imitation of great Greek tragedy would be an absurdly futile attempt, so highly indigenous to Hellas was epic-drama. "First, if it be objected that what I publish is no true poem, in the strict laws of time, I confess it: as also in the want of a proper chorus: whose habits and moods are such and so difficult as not any, whom I have seen, since the ancients, no, not they who have most presently affected laws, have yet come in the way of. Nor is it needful, or almost possible in these our times and to such auditors as commonly things are presented, to observe the old state and splendors of dramatic poems. . . . In the meantime, if in truth of argument, dignity of persons, gravity and height of elocution, fulness and frequency of sentence, I have discharged the other offices of a tragic writer, let not the absence of those forces be imputed to me."

His desire to achieve "fulness and frequency of sentence" reveals at once that he had Seneca in mind for his model. An examination of the text corroborates this. Some of the moralizings are translations word for word from Seneca; for example:

> Wrath covered carries fate:
> Revenge is lost if I profess my hate.[2]

[1] Preface to *Sejanus*, vol. I, p. 272.

[1] *Sejanus*, I, 1; cf. *Nudea*, 153–154. "Ira quae tegitur nocet professa perdunt odia vindictae locum."

Other lines of Jonson preserve the sentiment of Seneca without exact phraseology. Such are the lines which irritated Coleridge to the point of labeling the drama "rant and ventriloquism."

> Adultery, it is the lightest ill
> I will commit. A race of wicked acts
> Shall flow out of my anger and o'erspread
> The world's fair face.[1]

A few lines further:

"SEJANUS: Whom hatred frights, let him not dream of sovereignty." So said Eteocles to Jocasta:

> Who shrinks from hatred does not wish to reign.[2]

The conversation of Sejanus in this scene is reminiscent of Senecan tyrants in *Thyestes*, *Phoenissae*, *Octavia*, and many individual lines may be identified. In the fifth act Sejanus enters with the satisfaction of his tyranny full upon him:

> Swell, swell, my joys . . .
> My roof receives me not: 'tis air I tread,
> And at each step, I feel my advanced head
> Knock out a star in heaven.[3]

So Atreus enters exultingly in

> The peer of stars I move, high over all,
> And with exalted head attain the heavens.[4]

In the tragic dénouement, Terentius, true to ancient

[1] *Thyestes*, 44–48.
[2] *Phoenissae*, 654.
[3] *Sejanus*, V, 1.
[4] *Thyestes*, 885–886.

custom, reports the terrible end of Sejanus to the spectators.[1] The description of it resembles the account of the death of Hippolytus which the messenger gave to Theseus.[2] It was a careful student of Seneca's fearful detail who drew that picture in equally terrible completeness. Not only in each individual phase, but in his whole manner of conducting the drama, Jonson has reproduced Senecan style. His remarkably faithful picture of the Roman Empire, gained by his prodigious erudition, really produces better Roman tragedy than did the Old Latin poet himself. He, it will be remembered, recast the old Greek themes in his own inadequate manner, not hazarding his head on a portrayal of the tragedies of his own time. To make each word and act historically accurate, Jonson fully explored Tacitus, Pliny, and Suetonius, and when Seneca would not yield a maxim, quoted the satires of Horace and Juvenal. But enough attention has been called to Jonson's thorough footnotes, dubbed an offense alike to the learned and unlearned. This wonderfully faithful achievement must have given infinite satisfaction to the author, for there was no one who could challenge him in just that particular line of excellence.

[1] *Sejanus*, V, 10.

[2] *Hippolytus*, 1093–1114; cf. Amphitryon: *Hercules Furens* 1000, 1009, 1022–1026.

Although unpopular with the public, *Sejanus* called forth a host of commendatory verses from fellow dramatists. Even John Marston could so far recover himself from the wars of *The Poetaster* as to utter praise.

> For never English shall, or hath before,
> Spoke fuller graced.[1]

Perhaps these appreciations induced him eight years later to essay another historical triumph. This play met with the same public experience as *Sejanus*. As Francis Beaumont expressed it, his learning far exceeded the popular grasp.

> But thou hast squared thy rules by what is good,
> And art three ages, yet, from understood.[2]

That describes his limitations. Its intellectual character was not relieved by any convincing note. Each one of the group of conspirators represents some aberrant passion too exaggerated in its single aspect to be real. The portrayal of Catiline exceeds even the lurid picture drawn by Cicero. These transparent characterizations deprive Jonson's tragedies of the *complication* the Greeks regarded essential. In style, in very words often, Jonson resurrected Seneca in *Catiline* as he did in *Sejanus*. The ghost of Sylla rises on the first scene with forboding as did the ghost of Tantalus in *Thyestes*.

[1] Jonson: *Works*, vol. I, p. cii. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. cvi.

Catiline calling upon the universe to echo his passion reminds one that Nature in Seneca was always consonant with the passions of men. It is notable that in this play Jonson attempted the tragic chorus. It was not, after all, so great a feat to imitate the Senecan chorus, for it was wholly outside the trend of dramatic action, but Jonson's lyric interludes fall short of Seneca's dignity. As for the scholastic translation of Cicero in *Catiline*, the wonder is not that Jonson did not perceive "it was enough to stifle any play,"[1] as Swinburne says, but that Jonson succeeded as well as he did dramatically.

V. JONSON'S EXPERIMENTS IN DRAMA

There remain to discuss the four plays of Ben Jonson in which he made trial of the dramatic fashions of his time. His experiment, however, in romantic tragedy, was not to the extent of an entire play. It constitutes only the insertions in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, which are additions in no trivial sense. It was Ben Jonson who raised Hieronimo's madness above the Senecan level of Kyd's tragedy, to rank with Shakespeare's enduring conceptions. When Hieronimo returns from his fatal discovery in the garden, Jonson makes him present his son's body to Isabella with the raving words:

[1] Swinburne: *Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 56.

He supped with us tonight, frolic and merry . . .
He hath no custom to stay out so late.
He may be in his chamber: some go see.
Roderigo, ho![1]

So Pedro and Jacques enter, and Hieronimo issues his commands to Jacques for the summoning of Horatio. Then calling Pedro to the body of his son, he asks:

"Knowest thou who this is?"
PEDRO: Too well, sir.
HIERONIMO: Too well! who, who is it? Peace, Isabella.
Nay, blush not, man.
PEDRO: It is my lord Horatio.
HIERONIMO: Ha, ha, St. James! but this doth make me laugh,
That there are more deluded than myself.[2]

Truly Greek dramatic irony. In the few scenes interpolated in this romantic tragedy, Jonson has caught the Greek ideal of tragedy more than in the conscious labors of months over *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. This is that legitimate effecting of pity and fear that Sophocles achieved and Aristotle decreed. The other scenes with Hieronimo show Jonson's strong conception of the passion of grief:

My son! and what's a son? A thing begot
Within a pair of minutes . . . thereabout, . . .
What is there yet in a son,
To make a father dote, rave or run mad?[3]

The public, we are told, were well pleased with the

[1] *Spanish Tragedy*, II, 5. [2] *Ibid.*, II, 5. [3] *Ibid.*, III, 2.

painter's scene. Coleridge thought that all the additions could have been done by none but Shakespeare. We have other evidences, however, that Jonson might have been great in the lines he did not finally elect. The additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* were written in one of his rare moods of sympathy with human passion, in which Jonson also conceived *The Case is Altered* and *The Sad Shepherd.*

The Case is Altered contains more concrete borrowing from Plautus than any of Jonson's more mature drama. Situations from both *Captivi* and *Aulularia* are adapted to a romantic environment. Jaques de Prie appears in Milan as a beggar and the father of a charming, most unbeggarly maid, Rachel. Paulo, the son of Count Ferneze, falls in love with her, but is obliged to leave the city in the cause of war. Nearly every able-bodied man in Milan in his absence tried to win the love of Rachel, and the cross-purposes of various lovers are very amusing. Rachel herself is carried off under false pretenses, but rescued in time by Paulo and discovered to be a royal maid of France. The nature of Jaques is like that of the miserly Euclio[1] drawn with unusual distinction by Plautus. His speech is at times literally Euclio's.[2] Euclio, too, had a daughter and was in continual panic for fear the lovers he dis-

[1] *The Case is Altered,* Act I, last colloquy; Act II, 1.
[2] *Ibid.,* Act II, 1.

covered in the neighborhood of his house were aiming to steal his gold. So Jaques left his mansion in fear and trembling.

> Ope the door, Rachel: set it again, daughter:
> But sit in it thyself, and talk aloud,
> As if there were some more in th' house with thee.
> Put out the fire, kill the chimney's heat,
> That it may breathe no more than a dead man:
> The more we spare, my child, the more we gain.[1]

As Gifford points out, Jonson in this scene made a mistake in having Jaques reveal the mystery about Rachel while addressing the spectators. It was the custom for Plautus' first actor in a scene to discourse to the audience as an apology for the recently omitted chorus. The story of the lost and found divulged at the end of the play is from the same Plautine *Captivi* from which Heywood derived part of the plot of his drama by that name. There is much in Jonson's play that Plautus did not contribute; passages of inspired poetry; the maiden Rachel herself, worthy to stand among the heroines of romantic comedy; the whimsical Juniper, at the same time philosopher and merry child of Fortune. The introspective nature of Count Ferneze [2] is also reminiscent of the best work of romantic comedy.

The Sad Shepherd is the inspiration now of eulogy on the part of the critics: now of the disdain of

[1] E.g. V, 4. *The Case is Altered.*

[2] *The Case is Altered*, V. 4.

Swinburne.[1] In behalf of the classics he protests against the grotesque combination of the Greek Earine with Much and Maudlin.[2] The pastoral element of the play is essentially English, though no doubt Bion and Theocritus inspired much of the delicate imagery which may be found in the lines.[3] When Sappho's description of the nightingale graces the same sheet as the aspersions of the old Witch, it is indeed time for the student of the classics to turn the page; nevertheless Jonson's "dear good angel of the spring" dwells longer in the mind than "Ηρος αγγελος ἱμεροφωνος αηδων." [4]

The last of Jonson's experiments is more of an exposition of Plato than a drama. The substance of the Athenian philosopher's theory of love as explained in the *Symposium* inspired rare poetry from Jonson in the speeches of the melancholy Lovel.

> It is a fable of Plato's in his *banquet*,
> And uttered there by Aristophanes.[5]

Yet in accordance with the fashion of society he transposed what Plato idealized as the love of man for man into the love of man for woman. His play was so full of Platonic doctrine that it must

[1] Swinburne: *Study of Jonson*, p. 86.
[2] II, 1, p. 498, vol. II. [3] I, 2, p. 494, vol. II.
[4] Vol. II, p. 504; fn. Gifford.
[5] *The New Inn*, III, 2, p. 365, vol. II.

have afforded a wealth of material to the courtly salons that were absorbed in its refinement.

VI. CONCLUSION

Our fourth and last group, therefore, is decidedly out of the main line of classic influence. In Jonson's faithful imitation of Senecan style, in his absorbing interest in Aristophanic satire and allegory, finally, most saliently for the history of English drama, in comedy of intrigue, his work reveals the influence of the ancient dramatists. We who have many generations of scholarly interpretation behind us, find it difficult to appreciate what Jonson's remarkable comprehension of classic literature meant in the day of Elizabeth. He embodied this knowledge first with complete success in *Every Man in his Humor*, but the vicissitudes of his career thrust him back on the defensive for a series of years while he waged wars with the weapons of Aristophanes. From 1605 to 1614 succeeded happier years for his literary life, when he returned to the cardinal doctrine of his most enlightened labor. Within this period fell the comedies of intrigue which Symonds considers his masterpieces. Certainly his greatest work was that conceived with rare insight into the meaning of comedy. This service performed, Jonson again intrenched himself behind the scenes with the license of dictator

of life. The effect upon his drama was characterization ruling action; episodic plots, which Aristotle frowned upon; satirical delineation. The history of Jonson's literary career is, therefore, from 1615 on, a gradual breaking away from the classic ideals of harmony and measure which the ancients embodied in the best of their art. He had indeed achieved that, but he grew farther away from it as he matured. Juvenal's testimony of himself is infinitely true of Jonson:

"Difficile est Satiram non scribere."[1] It is difficult *not* to write satire.

With the following words an editor of Jonson closed his study:

"The serene wisdom in the face of Sophocles, the calm of the Phidian Zeus, the gleam of wings along the moonlit Parthenon . . . these were not for him."[2]

[1] Juvenal: *Satires.* I, 1, 30.

[2] H. S. Mallory: *The Poetaster.* Yale Studies in English. Preface.

THE INFLUENCE OF GREEK LITERATURE ON WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

I. INTRODUCTION

PAENETIUS: The spirit of Greece, passing through and ascending upon the world, hath so animated universal nature, that the very rocks and woods, the very torrents and wilds burst forth with it, and it falls, Aemilianus, even from me.

— LANDOR, *Imaginary Conversations, Greeks and Romans.*

COMPARATIVE studies in Greek and English call for frequent use of the terms "classicism" and "Hellenism" and their corresponding adjectives. The word "classicism" has had such a complex evolution in literary history that I have tried to avoid it except when referring in a general way to the culture of Greece and Rome. Classicism as a standard of art was evolved by later generations from the principles and characteristics of Roman art, known through the surviving work of their greatest men, their criticism, and such a compendium of rules as Horace's *Ars Poetica.* This standard was revised by the Italian Humanists, more or less modified by their own view of what was typically ancient, stereotyped by redefinition, and transmitted to French and English humanists. By the late seventeenth century its meanings had crystal-

lized into laws of order, restraint, and regularity. Then the world had to have a new era of scholarship and a redefinition of classicism. In this new modern sense, I understand it to refer to the standards of Greece and Rome, or to a certain attainment in knowledge of this culture. These are nineteenth-century interpretations which I adopt in the former sense in criticizing literary work, and in the latter when referring to scholarship and general cultivation. Classical or classic in the unhistoric sense, signifying excellence worthy to endure, and classicism in the seventeenth and eighteenth century idiom, I shall not use except in obvious connections. By the "classics" I refer to the great relics of Greek and Roman literature.

Since classicism has both Greek and Roman elements, however, and the object of this study is to specialize in the influence of Greek upon English authors, I shall confine myself chiefly to Hellenism and try to explain my meaning when speaking of what seems "Greek" or "Hellenistic." Hellenism will be used to refer to a love and affinity for the culture of Greece and Rome: Greek or Hellenistic to characteristics and material in modern art derived from Greek sources, or from a study of the artistic ideals of Greece. Pater, Arnold, Murray, and many others have their interpretations of this ideal, their stress upon this or that symbol, for the

Greek spirit and the Greek genius mean many things to many men. I venture only as a working basis to describe the characteristics of the Greek genius and the Greek spirit as follows: The genius of the Greeks is manifest in their application of the artistic ideal to art and literature; their interpretation of life defines the Greek spirit.

1. Greek ideal applied to art:[1] characterized by
   (*a*) unity or centrality
   (*b*) harmony
   (*c*) blitheness or serenity
   (*d*) repose
2. Greek ideal applied to literature characterized by:
   (*a*) harmony (both the outward harmony, which is beauty of form, and the inner harmony, which is poise)
   (*b*) clarity
   (*c*) unity
   (*d*) vividness
   (*e*) universality
3. Greek ideal applied to life was:
   (*a*) vividly imaginative
   (*b*) deeply religious
   (*c*) aesthetic
   (*d*) humanistic (in the primary meaning of the word, interested in human culture)

[1] Pater: *Renaissance*, p. 227.

II. CLASSICAL EDUCATION

Among nineteenth-century men of letters, Walter Savage Landor is an acknowledged Hellenist. In his education he shared the first fruits of the Greek revival; he was trained chiefly by Cambridge men in the Greek traditions of Porson, Bentley, and Parr; his criticism shows the liberating influence of the German humanists; his prose and poetical works draw largely upon Greek sources which eighteenth-century scholarship had rediscovered for the new culture. As a Hellenist of his time, however, Landor was somewhat unique because he denied himself the privilege of direct access to Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, and Schlegel. He indeed appreciated the scholarly work of Heyne and other Germans in their editing of Greek; he revived the Laocoön in "Pericles and Aspasia," when the latter writes of the scope, limitations, and variety of sculpture, painting, and poetry.

"Painting by degrees will perceive her advantages over sculpture; but if there are paces between sculpture and poetry, there are parasangs between painting and poetry. . . . Sculpture and painting are moments of life; Poetry is life itself, and everything around it and above it."[1]

Naturally the popular currents of interpretation

[1] "Pericles and Aspasia," LXXII.

springing from Coleridge and other transmitters of German Hellenism affected Landor, because they had penetrated England by the time he began his prose composition. Some unconsidered prejudice against the language, against the emotion and formlessness of the writing of the German Romanticists, kept Landor from German comparative studies, from intercourse with Schlegel,[1] and an appreciation of Goethe. Their historical and philosophical methods of interpretation were not Landor's. Landor followed the English university tradition in his point of view toward classical culture.

During the last twenty years of the eighteenth century at Rugby and Oxford, Latin lessons in translation and composition had their traditional importance in daily exercises. But when Landor was at Rugby, from 1785 to 1791, Greek was already a rival of Latin. Dr. James, head master, in the annals of Rugby was "an accomplished classical scholar,"[2] and brought with him to Rugby "Cambridge scholarship and Eton methods." The tutors were Dr. John Sleath, later master of St. Paul's, who "made himself a name in the scholastic world,"[3] and Philip Homer, "one of the best Greek scholars of his day."[4]

[1] Forster.
[2] Rouse: *History of Rugby*, p. 129.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 152.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

The weekly schedule in the Classics for Fifth and Sixth Form boys in Landor's time it may be interesting to quote from Rugby history.[1]

Monday: Homer, Vergil, Scriptores Romani, 30 lines construed.

Tuesday: Cicero, Poetae Graeci.

Wednesday: Poetae Graeci, Scriptores Graeci, Livy or Tacitus or Cicero or Greek Grammar lesson. Composition lesson. Latin verses.

Thursday: Ovid, Homer; copy of lyric verses, jambics, sapphics, aesclepiads, alconics, or trochaics (a few boys, like Landor and Butler, did Greek verses).

Friday: Homer, Horace or Juvenal, Vergil (50 lines), Cicero, Ovid.

Saturday: Horace (60 lines). Greek play or Demosthenes. Latin theme prescribed.[2]

It was considered an era of scholarship at Rugby for a group of unusual students gathered there in the eighth decade.[3] Besides Landor, there were Samuel Butler, destined to be editor of Aeschylus in

[1] Rouse, W. H. D.: *History of Rugby*, pp. 137–139. Lower Form boys had lessons in Caesar, Cicero, Terence, Ovid, Vergil, Horace, Lucian, Aesop, or Poetae Graeci. Exercises in Latin prose and verse, p. 140.

[2] For Greek plays, there were used Burgess' Pentalogia with Latin translation, or separate editions of *Hippolytus, Medea, Philoctetes, Prometheus* and *Plutus;* Demosthenes and Pindar might be read in selections instead of a play.

[3] Landor: "I have forgotten my Greek, of which I had formerly as much as boys of fifteen now. Butler, afterwards bishop of Lichfield, and myself were the first at Rugby or, I believe, at any other school, who attempted a Greek verse."

Porson's place, and Henry Cary, translator of Dante and Pindar. The work of these students gave distinction to the classical studies in this Rugby period and was stimulating to masters and students alike, for it is said of Dr. James that he often confessed Landor more apt than himself in Latin phrases. Of all the students, Landor was most marked for his ability in Latin composition. Says his biographer, Colvin: "As regards Latin he is the one known instance in which the traditional classical education of our schools took full effect and was carried out to its furthest practical consequences. Not only did Latin become in boyhood, and remain to the last, a second mother tongue to him; his ideal of behavior at the same time modeled itself on the ancient Roman,"[1] and in school quarrels he defended himself with Latin satire.

When banished from Rugby, in 1791, Landor, according to the list above, had read Homer, several Greek plays, some Demosthenes, and selections from history and Greek lyric poetry.[2] During the interval before Oxford, with a tutor Landor continued his classical lessons, especially Sophocles and Pindar, and Greek and Latin composition.

[1] Colvin: *Landor*, p. 10.

[2] Robert Landor (writing of Walter): "He remained at Rugby till 15 or 16, and gained the character of more than common scholarship, by his Latin verse especially." Forster: Vol. 1, p. 29.

At Trinity College, Oxford, 1794–1795, he was known for Latin verse and Greek and Latin reading, and most of all for political agitation.

The brother of Landor compares the Greek of those times and ours, helping us to form an idea of Walter Landor's scholarship for one of his period. "At school and college he had gained superiority over his companions, and seventy years ago very little Greek was sufficient for such distinction. There are better scholars passing from our public schools now than were then the fellows of my college who had taken their master's degrees. . . . It was not till after he had left England and was preparing to qualify himself for the *Imaginary Conversations* and 'Pericles and Aspasia,' that he applied his thoughts thoroughly to Greek literature, and even then his reading was very confined . . . compared with such students as the universities are producing now, he was a very idle student, idle indeed. . . . Parr once described him to me as a most excellent Latin scholar, with some creditable knowledge of Greek."[1]

[1] Forster: I, p. 22. Note: Dr. Routh was at Oxford in Landor's time and made president of Magdalen the year before Landor entered. He was "one of the literary luminaries of his time," in Parr's phrase, and "in learning and taste inferior to none." — Memoirs of Parr, quoted by Sandys, *History of Classical Scholarship,* III, p. 393.

It is clear from this letter and from Parr's judgment that Landor's attainments in Greek were not due to accurate scholarship but to associations which cultivated his taste and quickened his sympathies with Greek ideals. Through early study in Homer, Pindar, and the drama, Greek life presented itself vividly to his imagination.

Greek readings, continued privately in London and Wales during the three years after Oxford, prove his steadfast interest in the literature in which his Rugby training had laid the foundation. "Besides Pindar he read again in these years Homer and the tragedians," and then found a greater love in Milton. His undergraduate poetry consisted of translations of Greek and Latin, of experiments in classical metres, like his Rugby verse, and some trivial things in eighteenth-century style, which had brief publication and short life. His apprenticeship to Pope and Dryden ceased when acquaintance with Milton began. The year 1797 marks the real beginning of his literary activity.

III. ASSOCIATIONS WITH PARR AND SOUTHEY

Certain associations strengthened Landor's interest in Greek and Latin, especially his long intercourse with Parr and Southey. The acquaintance with Parr began early, in Warwickshire, before Landor had left Oxford, and in after days at home Landor was

often at the neighboring house of the great Latinist in Hatton, a vigorous and positive young character in Whig and classical foregatherings there. "At Parr's I converse only with Parr" (to the exclusion of other guests) about matters of scholarly importance, especially Catullus, or the fading tradition of writing in Latin. Parr discerned in Landor a youth with genius for classical study, was glad to advise him about his Latin verses,[1] offered him books from his good classical library, directed his taste, especially in matters pertaining to classical lyrics, and freely opened his scholarly mind in the forum of discussion.[2] "His intercourse with the old, liberty-loving scholar and divine was very much the happiest, and far from the least profitable, of this period of his life."[3] Parr had a livelier interest in Landor's Latin verse than in his English. Landor dedicated his Latin poetry to Parr, adding that he "owed to him a great deal of what he knew,"[4] and some years later testified that his "first literary exercises were made under the eye and guidance of

[1] Correspondence of Parr and Landor, Forster, I, pp. 159–165.

[2] "Walter, your genius and talent, your various and splendid attainment, your ardent affection, your high and heroic spirit will ever command my admiration and give me a lively interest in your happiness. I have read the Alcaics five or six times. They are worthy of you." Forster, I, p. 326 (Letter of Parr).

[3] Forster: *Biography*, vol. I, p. 113.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 416.

his venerable friend; his house, his library, his heart, had always been open to him."[1]

It was Parr who sent on to the fraternity of Lake poets the kindly notice that "in the course of the summer 1807 Mr. Walter Landor would call, while on a tour to the Lakes. . . . He is my particular friend . . . impetuous, open-hearted, magnanimous, largely furnished with general knowledge, well versed in the classical writers, a man of original genius."[2] And so a famous literary alliance began, in the interests of English classicism.

At their meeting Southey confided his plan of a series of mythological poems, received Landor's encouragement at this critical point in his career, and his advice upon the metres used in his next publication. Landor urged Southey to follow ancient poetic models: "Are we not a little too fond of novelty and experiment; is it not reasonable to prefer those kinds of versification which the best poets have adopted and the best judges have cherished for the longest time?"[3] There is ample scope for originality in conception, passion, character; but in form—"I beseech you, Southey, use such materials as have already stood the test," consider the "exquisite taste and elevation of soul of Pindar,"[4] whose poetry we are just beginning to

[1] Forster: *Biography*, vol. I, p. 127.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 206.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 216.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

understand. The most complicated of ancient metres is "not so hard to manage as English blank verse." Reflecting Parr's preferences, Landor recommended to Southey a study of Catullus' metres, whose taste was the most exquisite of all poets.[1] We are indebted to Landor for restraint on Southey's romanticism and to Southey for his protest against Landor's writing in Latin, a faculty, of course, which Dr. Parr, confirmed old Latinist, had always encouraged. In correspondence with Southey, Landor described his plans for writing and commented on his classical reading; for example, that Euripides mutilates Athenian heroes, or Aristotle is too difficult in the original, and he is using Twining's translation.[2] Classical culture is ever present in the minds of both men as the only proper background for literature. Southey admired most in Landor his classical qualities, and Landor kept Southey mindful of ancient models.

IV. LANDOR AS CRITIC. HIS LITERARY IDEALS

Landor was endowed with a strongly critical mind. He may not be considered a great critic, if one mean by that a more constructive, philosophical labor in criticism. From his keen, original, penetrating analysis of many phases of experience and thought, one may build up a certain synthesis

[1] Forster: *Biography*, vol. I, p. 218. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 250.

of principles, which combine in a fine critical spirit what is individual and what is traditional, what is creative and what is conformative. On the side of thought, Landor was individual and creative, in many things a revolutionist, or a rebel, unsatisfied with man's present condition, reaching after perfection, eagerly, searchingly. If the love of perfection animated his judgments, it inspired no less the form of his work, and the greatest symbol of human perfection he found in the Greek ideal. By this standard he measured his own work, and the art, philosophy, and affairs of men, historical and contemporary. Emerson writes of Landor's "love of Truth and Beauty,"[1] and another friend calls these the "prime objects of his worship."[2] Like the Greeks, he confined his quest of perfection to this finite world of man, nature and art. Therefore his principles were objective; the law is outside, governing form and content, not within, a spiritual, molding force. This is the contrast between Landor and Coleridge or the German school of philosophy. Landor does not conceive of society and art as one organism with its own inner spiritual principle, nor build on the evolution of all human things toward a future consummation.

The range of his intellect has been described by

[1] Emerson: *English Traits.*

[2] Nicoll: *Literary Anecdotes of Nineteenth Century*, p. 211.

E. C. Stedman: "Landor's volumes not only touch upon the whole procession of those seventy years with keen intuitive treatment of their important events, but go farther and almost cover the range of human action and thought."[1]

The source of his idea of perfection was described by the Countess of Blessington: "He reads of the ancients, thinks, lives with and dreams of them; has imbued his thoughts with their lofty aspirations, and noble contempt of what is unworthy; and yet retains the peculiarities that distinguish him from them, as well as from the common herd of men. These peculiarities consist in a fearless and uncompromising expression of his thoughts . . . generosity . . . simplicity in his own mode of life . . . sternness of mind and tenderness of heart."[2]

Besides a comprehensive and sympathetic imagination, Landor's mind was endowed with keen analytical power. In the words of Mrs. Browning, "He discriminates, he understands, and discerns."[3] He is therefore strong in the judgment of particulars, convincing because he sees the details, their bearing upon the whole, and finds a vivid phrase to express the distinction.[4]

[1] Stedman: *Victorian Poets*, p. 36.

[2] Nicoll: *Literary Anecdotes*, p. 173.

[3] *Letters of the Brownings*, p. 288, vol. I.

[4] E.g. Analysis of poetry of Wordsworth, first dialogue, "Southey and Porson."

The feeling for perfection in Landor finds expression in ideals of culture, conduct and art, applied in criticism. "The passion for order, proportion, beauty of form, naturally influenced deeply Landor's critical judgments."[1] "In art he loves the Greeks, and in sculpture them only."[2] He had a wide comparative view of culture and art, measuring ancient with modern; his works abound in comparisons which are discriminating in the case of Greek, Latin, and English, but have less candor where French and German are concerned.

Greek ideas of art were also finely applied in his creative work. "Landor with respect to artistic form was essentially Greek. The feeling for order, proportion, harmony, simplicity, was with him paramount. He never allowed a great idea or a beautiful image or felicitous expression to appear in his writing until he had found a place for it."[3] The idea must be both true and beautiful; the ideal beauty was the "sublimer emanation" of the sensible reality, but the ideal beauty is the "more *real* of the two."[4]

Order, proportion, harmony, cadence, simplicity, were Landor's Greek ideals for the formal side of

[1] Dowden: *Studies in Literature*, pp. 182–184.
[2] Emerson: *English Traits*.
[3] Dowden: *Studies in Literature*, pp. 182–184.
[4] *Imaginary Conversations*, "Southey and Porson."

literature. Sublimity, breadth, humanity, intensity purged and restrained by art — these were Landor's symbols for the spiritual ideal in poetry. "For any high and wide operation, a poet must be endued, not with passion indeed, but with power and mastery over it; with imagination, with reflection, with observation, and with discernment."[1] "The poet must take man from God's hands, look into every fiber of his heart and brain, must be able to take the magnificent work to pieces and to reconstruct it."[2] Allegory is too unsubstantial for poetry's highest purposes.[3] The great objects of poetry are aesthetic and imaginative; the poet must be eminently the artist, not a rough hewer of untried metres. Sublimity must unite with beauty of form, — for Landor did not trust all to the "constructive power of the imagination." Such epic ideals of poetry were the Greek.

Indeed, Landor himself stated that the forms of literature had been established for all time by the Greeks. Epic writers must go back to Homer to learn the art of narrative; "momentous action" and "heroic character."[4] Any tragedy worthy of

[1] "Pericles and Aspasia," CXXVIII.

[2] *Imaginary Conversations*, "Lucian and Timotheus."

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Forster: *Biography and Letters of Landor*, vol. II, p. 339. "A good epic shows us more and more distinctly, at every book of it we open, the features and properties of heroic character,

the name should have the spirit, form, and proportion of Greek drama, by which he referred to the practice of Sophocles and Aeschylus rather than Euripides, who brought the Titans to earth and made them familiars. Let there be no interlude or relaxing comedy — the inventions of base Elizabethan play-writers. "Tragedy has no bye-paths, no resting places, there is everywhere action and passion."[1] He had the Aeschylean conception of great human character struggling against unmerited evil, and passionate, inscrutable forces shaping the catastrophe,[2] to which every scene must be instrumental. He despised early eighteenth-century drama, such as *Cato*, and the French classical tragedy, and also the minor Elizabethans, no less, for their rude tavern-yard ways; but admired Shakespeare for his humanity and imagination. He realized in truth that English audiences are not ready to be purged by pity and fear.[3] His own *Count Julian*, as Southey said, was too Greek for

and terminates with accomplishing some momentous action." From the "*Pentameron.*" Cf. Aristotle's definition of epic.

[1] Forster, II, p. 340.

[2] Forster, II, pp. 339–344. "A good tragedy shows us that greater men than ourselves have suffered more severely and more unjustly. Sometimes we go away in triumph with affliction proved and purified and leave her under the smiles of heaven . . . here is the highest point to which poetry can attain."

[3] Forster: *Biography*, vol. I, p. 296.

representation in modern times,[1] but Landor, with unfaltering Hellenism, clung to the Greek dramatic principle. Trivial manipulations of plot he considered the curse of modern drama. Even comedy should have one action and one event, going back to the simpler construction of Aristophanes; and if you would know how to direct satire, study the comedies of Aristophanes, Plautus and Terence.[2]

The ancient idyl was to Landor the model for all time, for it has the real atmosphere of shepherd life, and without this illusion there can be no successful pastoral. The eighteenth century, even Thomson, made a "ridiculous mixture of modern and antique." [3] Pastoral is the daughter of Myth and the Enchanted Isles. For idyllic description, let the poet turn to Virgil and Theocritus, the models of freshness and grace in natural scenes.

As models of metre and form Landor thought the classic lyrics were supreme. The English poet should adopt those that are best fitted for English harmonies (not the anapaest or the hexameter)[4] remembering that the English language has even greater variety of cadence than the Greek.

Catullus, Sappho, Simonides, and for the intenser

[1] Forster; *Biography*, vol. I, p. 293.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 422–423 (Letters); II, p. 378 ("Reviewing a Reviewer"). See dialogues of "Milton and Marvel."

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 189.

[4] Dialogue of "Milton and Marvel."

things, Pindar, are the finest sources for metrical study. New cadences are displeasing to the ear and violate the principles of poetry, whose object is to soothe and satisfy the cultivated mind with echoes of ancient metrical beauties.

Prose, too, has its cadences, refined as those of poetry. "It is only an extension of metres, an amplification of harmonies, of which even the best and most varied poetry admits but few." [1] The men of antiquity wrote with charm even in relating the facts of history and the pleadings of oratory.[2] And how was such beauty of style attained? By the passionate spirit expressing itself with order and restraint. When Landor was most inspired, he was most restrained in expression; for "It is only in the moods of highest inspiration that art and austerity can dwell together." [3] "Order and restraint were always my objects," [4] he said, and continually revised his style, with Greek simplicity as his aim.[5]

[1] Dialogue of "Marvel and Parker."

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 351, "Give me the poetic mind, the mind poetic in all things."

[3] Crump: *Works of Landor:* vol. I, p. x.

[4] Forster: vol. II, p. 530.

[5] Cf. Evans: *Critical Study of Landor:* "By objectifying desperate and tremendous emotions in imagery so clear, pregnant, and concise that the very words aim to be as distinct and real as the deeds they celebrate, Landor was following the highest Greek models, Aeschylus and Sophocles."

What of his application of these ideals to his writings? In a letter he wrote of his own composition: "I thought how a Grecian would have written." In the Greek dialogues, in "Pericles and Aspasia," and the "Hellenics," Landor indeed wrote more as the Greeks have written than any English author before him. His style was characterized by Greek restraint, often at the expense of clearness in transition. Up to his seventieth year he continually changed his phrases in earlier works for the "severe and simple," and wrote in the Greek manner with undiminished power.[1]

When one speaks of Landor as following Greek models, it is important to explain that he did not imitate any author; his originality was his pride, his presiding genius. In his drama, in the "Hellenics," the Greek dialogues, and "Pericles and Aspasia," there is no slavish copying by a man of rule, or vague reminiscence of Greek, but complete retrospect. His imagination could enter and freely reconstruct the former times. This gift Mrs. Browning somewhat mystically described when she said Landor was most Greek because most English.[2] He had the his-

[1] Evans: *Critical Study of Landor*, p. 53, quotes from Landor the following: "I hate false words and seek with care, difficulty, and moroseness, those that fit the thing."

[2] *Letters of the Brownings.*

torical imagination untrammeled by a sense of fact, and soared through many anachronisms with Shakespearean success. Moreover, he could reproduce the Greeks both in the epic style and in the graceful idyl. In his lyrics he had a charming gift for expressing figure, description or idea with a perfection, complete both in the stanza and in the poem as a whole. Latin epigram he could write with the best of the Romans. Landor is known in our literature for the classic delicacy, grace, and finish of his commemorative verse. There are many sentences of epigrammatic brilliance in the dialogues, and let no one think these are casual, for the art of the "rhetorician" has prepared for the prophetic word. The Greek principle of unity characterized his drama, for he knew the importance of progressive action. His unity is least in the controversial dialogues, where the artist is overshadowed by the partisan. There is no development of the thought; at the end of such dialogues we wonder where we are — at the very *nadir* from Greece, to be sure. Landor required the lucid atmosphere of the Greek world, the calm of her serene untrammeled distance, the spirit of Epicurean lightness or repose, for the full expression of his artistic powers. His ideas were at their best away from the fervid air of modern social, political, and literary struggles.

V. IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS

There is an obvious Hellenism in the choice of the dialogue form. It might be Lucian or Xenophon or Plato, who gave him the impulse to adopt this form,[1] but he adapted the dialogue to his own temperament, which is not mirthful like Lucian's or mystic like Plato's. Landor confessed a fear of being influenced by Plato and avoided reading him before beginning a dialogue of his own. He also had a dread of being called Platonic by those barbaric reviewers. High seriousness of purpose, criticism of life in a search for the true way, and certain passages conducted in the dialectic method are tangible effects of Landor's reading of Plato. In contrast with Plato, however, Landor's argument is often onesided and unphilosophical, for he lacked the Greek power of bringing ideas to the court of reason that they may be rigorously tested by all sides.

Landor's avowed attitude toward Plato was anything but that of a literary disciple. He asserted that Plato lacked imagination, knowledge of human nature, and the highest poetical character, because

[1] See dialogue of "Lucian and Timotheus," *Imaginary Conversations* vol. I, p. 311. "He wished, however, I had studied Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero attentively, without which preparatory discipline no two persons could be introduced advantageously into a dialogue," etc.

he indulged in allegory, that "unsubstantial foundation" of poetry. It is new to hear from a great man of letters this critique upon the *Symposium:* "beset with puerilities, deformed with pedantry, disgraced with impurity." Some readers of Landor confess to find this refreshing, but others suspect a little malicious pride in the "Old Roman," as Carlyle called him, because it was more original to stay outside the magic circle of Plato's disciples than to be of his cult. The last editor of Landor humorously accounts for Landor's prejudice, that he hated above all men, metaphysicians, priests, and kings. "Plato was the first, Landor suspected him of a desire to be the second, and of an unholy liking for the company of the third."[1] By his "silly abuse of Plato"[2] Crump pleads that he should not be judged as a critic; so we must forgive Landor for this delusion among many rare and just appreciations of Greek authors.

The Imaginary Conversations, gathered under the heading of "Greek," were written from time to time during a period of about forty years (1820 to 1864). Each new publication of Landor's works included more of the Greek dialogues, which were cordially approved by Landor's few but discriminating readers.

[1] Crump: Works of Landor: Introduction, vol. I.
[2] *Letters of the Brownings.*

His friends rightly thought the author at his best when removed from the passion which he could not control when he wrote of contemporary affairs. The modern allusions are aggressive only in the group in which the mood is argumentative, but not in the contemplative or dramatic dialogues.

The group of argumentative dialogues includes Lucian and Timotheus, Diogenes and Plato, Solon and Pisistratus, Anacreon and Polycrates, Xerxes and Artabanus, Xenophon and Cyrus and Alcibiades, Demosthenes and Eubulides, Aeschines and Phocion. The sources of these, as cited by Landor's last editor, are chiefly Plutarch and Arrian and Herodotus, whose brief accounts of historical situations gave Landor ideas for dialogues. The subjects of these are affairs of Athenian government, philosophy, religion, law, war, destiny, art, and politics, with innumerable digressions on minute details of life, conduct, custom, and art. Controversies are not pursued in the Greek dialogues to a tedious point; there is plenty of relief in Athenian small talk, observations on human character and on literature.

The language is vigorous, figurative, often suggestive of the Greek, especially where the speaker is a man of Athenian letters, like Demosthenes, or Plato, or Aristotle. In such cases Landor has evidently studied the author's style in order to give

the illusion of the character.[1] At times Landor has written "as a Grecian would have written" so successfully that his work reads like a translation. It seems to me admirable that Landor could so well distinguish in his writing between the style of the Greek and the Roman, for the Roman style when once acquired is hard to dispel from one's writing. In some of the dialogues Landor writes in perfectly Ciceronian periods. His ear was so sensitive to matters of harmony, cadence, and phraseology that he could finely distinguish the two languages and reproduce the classic form and finish of each in English.

"Pericles and Sophocles" may be taken as an example of the contemplative mood. The characters meet when the decorations of the Piraeus and Poecile are completed. Pericles appeals to Sophocles to share his joy over this tribute to his administration, and Sophocles sincerely congratulates him, for this triumph of art rises "from the rich and delightful plain of equal laws." They speak of the mighty power of artists to restore the ancient heroes, our ancestors, to us, in nobler form than they had in life, for distance lends glory to lives. Then:

[1] E.g., "Demosthenes and Eubulides," *Imaginary Conversations*, vol. I, p. 140; "Aeschines and Phocion," *Imaginary Conversations*, vol. I, p. 165.

"Sophocles: It is folly to say that Death levels the whole human race; for it is only when he hath stripped men of everything external, that their deformities can be clearly discovered, or their worth correctly ascertained. Gratitude is soon silent; a little while longer, and Ingratitude is tired, is satisfied, is exhausted and sleeps. Lastly fly off the fumes of party spirit; the hottest and most putrid ebullition of self-love. We then see before us and contemplate calmly the creator of our customs, the ruler of our passions, the arbiter of our pleasures, and, under the gods, the disposer of our destiny."[1]

The talk turns to ideas of government and proceeds until a procession draws their attention to the distance.

"Pericles: Oh, what an odor of thyme and bay and myrtle! and from what a distance, bruised by the procession."

"Sophocles: What regular and full harmony! What a splendor and effulgence of white dresses, painful to aged eyes and dangerous to young!

"Pericles: I can distinguish many voices from among others. Some of them have blessed me for defending their innocence before the judges; some for exhorting Greece to unanimity; some for my

[1] "Pericles and Sophocles," *Imaginary Conversations*, vol. I, p. 61.

choice of friends. Ah, surely those sing sweetest! those are the voices, O Sophocles, that shake my heart with tenderness, a tenderness passing love, and excite it above the trumpet and cymbal. Return we to the gods: the crowd is waving the branches of olive, calling us by name, and closing to salute us.

"Sophocles: O citadel of Pallas more than all citadels, may the goddess of wisdom and war protect thee. . . . Hail, men of Athens! Pass onward; leave me: I follow. Go: behold the gods, the demigods, and Pericles!

"Artemidorus, come to my right. No: better walk between us; else they who run past may knock the flute out of your hand, or push it every now and then from the lip. Have you received the verses I sent you in the morning? — soon enough to learn the accents and cadences?"[1]

Here Landor is exalted by the beauty of the occasion so that he writes with inspired eloquence like that of poetic passages of Plato. The sentences quoted seem Greek in cadence, in structure, in expression; and in observation most natural and lifelike. The little scene which closes the dialogue is vividly Greek. In a few lines are conveyed the rich, spicy fragrance borne on the air, the charm of color and

[1] "Pericles and Sophicles," *Imaginary Conversations*, vol. I, p. 66.

movement in the procession, and the deep, religious feeling which is communicated as the worshipers pass.

Landor's dialogues presenting Greek women have some of the beauty of the unadmired Euripides; for example, those very qualities of humanity, tenderness, pathos, and sentiment which Landor thought was a lowering of the sublimity of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Helena and Iphigeneia are worthy to be compared with characters in Greek drama.

"HELENA: Where am I? Desert me not, O ye blessed from above! ye twain who brought me hither! Was it a dream? Stranger! thou seemest thoughtful; couldst thou answer me? Why so silent? I beseech and implore thee, speak.

"ACHILLES: Neither thy feet nor the feet of mules have borne thee where thou standest. Whether in the hours of departing sleep, or at what hour of the morning, I know not, O Helena! but Aphrodite and Thetis, inclining to my prayer, have, as thou art conscious, led thee into these solitudes. To me also have they shown the way, that I might behold the pride of Sparta, the marvel of the earth, and — how my heart swells and agonizes at the thought! the cause of innumerable woes to Hellas.

"HELENA: Stranger! thou art indeed one whom the goddesses or gods might lead, and glory in; such

is thy stature, thy voice, and thy demeanor; but who, if earthly, art thou?

"ACHILLES: Before thee, O Helena! stands Achilles, son of Peleus. Tremble not, turn not pale, bend not thy knees, O Helena!

"HELENA: Spare me, thou goddess born! thou cherished and only son of silver-footed Thetis!"

On the next page is an idyllic interlude.

"ACHILLES: Look around thee freely, perplexed no longer. Pleasant is this level eminence, surrounded by broom and myrtle, and crisp-leaved beech and broad dark pine above. Pleasant the short slender grass, bent by insects as they alight on it or climb along it, and shining up into our eyes, interrupted by tall sisterhoods of gray lavender, and by dark-eyed cistus, and by lightsome citisus, and by little troops of serpolet running in disorder here and there.

"HELENA: Wonderful! how didst thou ever learn to name so many plants? . . .

"ACHILLES: (Chiron) sang to me over the lyre the lives of Narcissus and Hyacinthus, brought back by the beautiful Hours, of silent unwearied feet, regular as the stars in their courses. Many of the trees and bright-eyed flowers once lived and moved, and spoke as we are speaking. They may yet have memories, although they have cares no longer.

"Helena! Ah! then they have no memories; and they see their own beauty only. . . . O my sweet brothers! how they tended me! how they loved me! how often they wished me to mount their horses and to hurl their javelins! . . . Happy, happy hours! soon over! Does happiness always go away before beauty? It must go then: surely it might stay that little while."[1]

"Aesop and Rhodope" is a Greek idyl in dramatic form. A poignant contrast of youth and age which is purely Hellenic is rendered with much sweetness and fancy. Out of fragments of conflicting tradition, Landor created the friendship of Aesop and Rhodope, and from fancy the farewell idyl within idyl sung by the father of Rhodope over the couch of his child. It seems the very reincarnation of Sicilian song.

There are idyllic scenes also in "Epicurus, Leontion and Ternissa," but the conversation is expanded to introduce the philosophy of Epicurus. In the garden of Epicurus are the sweet scents and the deep foliage of nature as in Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, and again the idyllic contrast of youth and age. The dialogue is intellectually and emotionally Greek. The setting is subtly prepared

[1] "Achilles and Helena," *Imaginary Conversations*, vol. I, pp. 1–6.

for the Epicurean theme; sweet, refreshing images enter the mind and charm it to repose: the vine leaves and sea air; the loves and tender beauties of Greek youth; reminiscence of old Greek tales, and the beguiling quest of Truth.

The dialogues of this group are more artistic and imaginative than the reflective conversations. We live again in old idyllic times; the ages that intervene are forgotten; and even the "deep-mouth'd Boeotian, Savage Landor" himself, who was the deus ex machina in the forum of Greek philosophers. Such objectivity no other English writer aspiring to the Greek style has attained. His dramatic idyls in prose and verse are the finest imitations of the Greek that we have.

The Roman dialogues show that Landor could also write as the Romans did, and we know that if it had not been for the insistence of Wordsworth, Southey, and other friends, he might never have written in any other way, for the Latin style he could assume with a native air. Their interest for the student of Landor's Hellenism lies in the continued reflections upon Greek life, philosophy and literature.

A tribute to the value of the *Imaginary Conversations of Greeks and Romans* as interpretations of the classical spirit is given in a few pages on "Landor as a Classic" by H. E. Scudder.

"The appeal which Landor makes to the literary class is very strong, and apart from a course of study in the Greek and Latin classics, I doubt if any single study would serve an author so well as the study of Landor. Indeed, there is perhaps no modern work which gives to the reader not familiar with Greek or Latin so good an idea of what we call classical literature. Better than a translation is the original writing of Landor for conveying the aroma which a translation so easily loses. The dignity of the classics, the formality, the fine use of sarcasm, the consciousness of an art in literature, — all these were to be found in the *Imaginary Conversations*. . . . Landor, for his contemporaries, is an ancient author with a fiery soul."[1]

"Better than a translation is the original writing of Landor" for conveying the Greek atmosphere. Scudder thus suggests what one would like to say of "Pericles and Aspasia" as well as of the dramatic idyls. About these the "aroma" is so Greek, so real, that we ask with a baffling wonder if Landor has not in some Fiesolan crypt or forgotten gloom of the Florentine Library, come upon the veritable Greek MS, which he has transcribed to deceive the tribe of "Scotch reviewers." But Landor leaves no trace of such discovery. "In writing my 'Pericles and Aspasia,' I had no books to consult. The

[1] H. E. Scudder: *Men and Letters*, "Landor as a Classic."

characters' thoughts and actions are all fictions. Pericles was somewhat less amiable, Aspasia somewhat less virtuous, Alcibiades somewhat less sensitive."[1]

The letters and interspersed lyrics are brilliant with Greek reality, as all readers of Landor have agreed. The fragments of verse in the letters, Forster considered the most thoroughly Greek that any Englishman had written. "Not mean is the exploit when a writer can satisfy the most exacting scholarship while he revives the forms or imitates the language of antiquity. But here we have something more, resembling rather antiquity itself than the most scholarly and successful presentation of it."[2]

In the letters are delightful interchanges of comment on Sappho and Alcaeus, on Homer, on Athenian drama, both comedy and tragedy, and a sketch of the growth of the Greek lyric poetry.[3] Comparisons of *Prometheus* and the *Iliad*, of Athenian and Ionian philosophers, descriptions of Pindar's composition and of the comedies of Aristophanes are finely conveyed by figures.[4] In almost every letter they vividly shape the thought. Aspasia

[1] Letter of Landor, April, 1836. Forster: *Biography*, vol. II, p. 294.

[2] Forster: *Biography*, vol. II, p. 295.

[3] "Pericles and Aspasia." Letters 44–53; 83; 154; 82.

[4] *Ibid.*, Letters 8 and 40.

was moved to write in praise of metaphors and to add: "It is a pity that they are often lamps which light nothing, and show only the nakedness of the walls they are nailed against."[1] There are some fine appreciations of Greek art. Philosophy has her share in the letters on dialectic, transmigration of souls, and the Athenian philosophy of love; government and war have theirs. "To write as the ancients have written without borrowing a thought or expression from them, is the most difficult thing we can achieve in poetry," Landor wrote in the character of Sidney.[2] There is no sign of effort or of imitation in "Pericles and Aspasia," but only ease, felicity, and the light of the Greek spirit.

VI. POETRY

Gebir was Landor's beginning in poetry, aspiring to the dignity of Greek narrative, but as a whole shadowy and unsustained. It has, however, magical descriptions which fascinated Shelley, especially such scenes as that of the Nymph and Tamar. As a poem of the period it has a unique character. There is no Romantic aspiration, no spiritual quest, no transcendental message to be revealed. Its world is finite, though Pagan in its rites and beliefs,

[1] "Pericles and Aspasia." Letter 144.

[2] "Dialogue of Sidney and Lord Brooke." *Imaginary Conversations*, vol. III.

and tragic Nemesis prepares the doom and prevails in the catastrophe. There may be a reminiscence of Greek tragedy in its plan, though this is structurally weak, due to a lack of subordination. Gebir is about to reconcile strife, retrieve the traditions of his fathers, and consummate the good by the marriage of Chrysaor and himself, when Fate intervenes with the poison conjured by the old nurse of Chrysaor. The jealousy of the nurse is a slight spring of action in comparison with Greek Nemesis, prepared by generations of unatoned evils and tragic fulfillment long delayed and impending. Landor's weakness in evolution, often seen in the dialogues, is even more apparent in his narrative.

There is more unity and simplicity in *Count Julian* than in *Gebir*. In this drama Landor has gained in artistic power. The result is greater condensation, force, and dramatic intensity. There is a certain Promethean grandeur about the character of the Count, Greek resignation, loyalty and fortitude in Covilla's, but a Shakespearean subtlety in Egilona's. The construction is planned after the Greek, and certain conventions observed, such as report of death, battle or other violent action, the evolution of Count Julian's emotion through the influences or dissuasion of counselors or of deterrent agents, his tragic assumption — "I am

the minister of wrath,"[1] and the apparent consummation of his vengeance just before the catastrophe. The fulfillment of tragedy in unmerited personal suffering — the purgation of the soul from earthly strife — is Landor's Greek ideal of tragedy.[2] Aeschylean destiny presides over the action.[3] Landor also wrote other dramas, a comedy and tragedy, a "trilogy," and some fragmentary Greek mythological plays, but he used, in these, more modern methods of interpreting character, while still aspiring after Greek elevation, intensity, form, proportion, and restraint. For these qualities his dramatic poetry was distinguished in a period whose drama was in general subjective, oversubtle, and unproportioned. His language is also free from the obscure or prolix tendencies of his times; finely eloquent, clear, progressive, beautiful in figure and natural feeling.

[1] Landor: *Count Julian*, Act II, sc. 1.

[2] *Ibid.*, Act III, sc. 1:

> One vast source
> Of melancholy, deep, impassable,
> Interminable, where his spirit alone
> Broods and o'ershadows all, bears him from earth
> And purifies his chasten'd soul for heaven.

[3] *Ibid.*, Act II, sc. 5:

> O destiny that callest me alone, etc.

also Act II, sc. III.

> Now behold
> The earthly passions war against the heavenly, etc.

The opening lines of the first idyl express the Greek spirit in Landor's "Hellenics."

> Who will away to Athens with me? who
> Loves choral songs and maidens crown'd with flowers,
> Unenvious? mount the pinnace; hoist the sail.
> I promise ye, as many as are here,
> Ye shall not, while ye tarry with me, taste
> From unrinsed barrel the diluted wine
> Of a low vineyard or a plant unpruned,
> But such as anciently the Aegean isles
> Pour'd in libation at their solemn feasts:
> And the same goblets shall ye grasp, embost
> With no vile figures of loose languid boors,
> But such as Gods have lived with, and have led.[1]

In the metaphor, Landor's offering is no "diluted wine," but such as the ancients themselves were wont to pour. The atmosphere of the "Hellenics" is the serene and radiant air of the Greek isles, with their foliage and fragrant flowers. Their themes are the rustic legends of shepherds, of maidens wooed, of spirits of air and sea and water, myths dear to the Greek idyllist, and simple pastoral incidents.[2] Theocritus' type of dramatic idyl is Landor's favorite in the "Hellenics." The dialogue of "Lysander Alcanor and Phonoe" is closest to the Theocritan style.[3] The "Hellenics" are not inter-

[1] Landor: *Hellenics*, 1, "Thrasymedes and Eunoe."
[2] "Ida and Damoetas," and "Alciphron and Leucippe."
[3] Cf. Idyl X, VII, V.

spersed with songs, as are many of the Sicilian idyls. "Ida and Damoetas," and "Alciphron and Leucippe" have the same simplicity as Theocritus, but this is not true of all Landor's idyls. All, however, have the limpid quality of the Sicilian idyl, their charm and immortal freshness. Landor could beautifully render the Greek pantheism:

> We are what suns and winds and waters make us;
> The mountains are our sponsors, and the rills
> Fashion and win their nursling with their smiles.[1]

In comparison with this simple, radiant interpretation, Nature in the poetry of melancholy Romanticists seems a gloomy reflection of the old worn thought of the world. Landor's idyls were "stranger guests,"

> Born in the lucid land of free pure song.[2]

Yet the "Hellenics" were not written in English till about forty years after they were first written in Latin. One regrets that Wordsworth, who pondered over the Latin idyls with a lexicon, always deploring their Latin form, could not have read the ultimate version.

In the group of "Miscellaneous" verse, composed of songs, epigrams, and odes, the influences

[1] Landor: *Hellenics*, 14, Chrysaor.
[2] Landor: Miscellaneous verse; "To Forster."

of Horace and Catullus seem to prevail. Having a command of varied metres through his knowledge of classical lyrics, and also a gift for concise, felicitous expression, Landor was excellent in "occasional" verses. As he often said, he was fond of imitating the sapphic and alcaic metres and skillful in many others. One would expect to find some choral odes in this collection, recalling Landor's early passion for Pindar; "Corinth" is a memorial to Greek traditions, but it is not Pindar. The poetic style of this collection of "Miscellaneous" odes and songs is typical of the Latin lyrics, lacking the enchantment and fervor of the Aeolians.

Landor's odes and songs in the Greek manner are to be found among the letters of Pericles and Aspasia. The "Ode to Miletus" is written in the Greek choral style.

Maiden there was whom Jove
Illuded into love,
    Happy and pure was she;
Glorious from her the shore became,
And Helle lifted up her name
To shine eternal o'er the river sea.

. . . . . .

At last there swells the hymn of praise,
And who inspires these sacred lays?
    "The founder of the walls ye see."
What human power could elevate
Those walls, that citadel, that gate?
"Miletus, O my sons! was he."

Hail then Miletus! Hail beloved town,
Parent of me and mine!
But let not power alone be thy renown,
Nor chiefs of ancient line.
Nor visits of the Gods

. . . . . .

Restless is Wealth; the nerves of Power
Sink, as a lute's in rain:
The Gods lend only for an hour
And then call back again

All else than Wisdom; she alone,
In truth's or Virtue's form,
Descending from the starry throne
Through radiance and through storm,
Remains." [1]

Here are the Pindaric apostrophe, aphorism, condensed figures, and choral development.

The following read like Aeolian fragments:

Happy to me has been the day,
The shortest of the year,
Though some, alas! are far away
Who made the longest yet more brief appear.[2]

Come sprinkle me soft music o'er the breast,
Bring me the varied colours into light
That now obscurely on its tablet rest,
Show me its flowers and figures fresh and bright.

Waked at thy voice and touch, again the chords
Restore what restless years had moved away,
Restore the glowing cheeks, the tender words,
Youth's short-lived spring and Pleasure's summer-day.[3]

[1] "Pericles and Aspasia": CXL.

[2] *Ibid.*, CXXXI.

[3] *Ibid.*, CVII.

Another Greek interpretation has deep-feeling and beauty:

> Artimidora, Gods invisible,
> While thou art lying faint along the couch,
> Have tied the sandal to thy veined feet,
> And stand beside thee, ready to convey
> Thy weary steps where other rivers flow.[1]

Landor's Greek verse had the poignancy of the Aeolian, and a quality of sensuous loveliness which I can best describe by the word "enchantment." He understood the Lesbian light and shadow:

> There is a gloom in deep love as in deep water.

VII. CONCLUSION

In his critical and creative work Landor was devoted to an exclusive artistic ideal shared only by those friends who like himself were imbued with scholarly culture. He did not try to popularize classical culture, but to appeal to the cultivated few with whom he would banquet late. To the man ignorant of the Greek tradition, Landor speaks in a strange language. His message is specialized by his Hellenic form. His lifelong study of Greek was retrospective, directed toward the past as past, antiquity, satisfying and complete. Let the imagination enter and reconstruct the life of Greece, that we may somehow share the glory and perfection

[1] *Hellenics*, XII.

of those former times. In Greek beauty we shall find the highest forms of art, and truth finite in beauty. Landor did not attempt to correlate Greek ideas with modern; he did not speak for his age and therefore his age took less interest in him; indeed his attitude toward his times was critically hostile. Moreover, Landor was neither a transcendentalist nor a humorist, and hence somewhat out of the nineteenth-century mood. The elder D'Israeli, wrote Landor to the Countess of Blessington, "tells me he does not know whether I have written a century too late or too early. The fact is, a century ago I should have had but fifty readers, chiefly in Oxford or Cambridge, and for the sake of calling me names, about a sarcasm in Plato or a derogation from the dignity of Pompey." [1]

And a century later, a strain of mysticism, of vague idealism, or Victorian sentiment would have helped his popularity immensely. Landor had an eighteenth-century mind with a strong bent for satire, combined with a Renaissance love of beauty. So "of course Landor dwells apart," [2] and among Hellenists of his own century he is the Olympian.

[1] Nicoll: *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 205.
[2] *Letters of the Brownings*, vol. I, p. 288.

THE HELLENISM OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

I. POETRY

Matthew Arnold's relation to the development of nineteenth-century ideas of Greek culture is interesting because his work is transitional. It shows two phases of the effect of Greek studies, first, imitation, and second, the practical application of Hellenic ideals to modern conditions. His poetical work, which for the most part was earlier than his prose, represents in general the imitative phase. It often follows the mode of other Victorian classicists, the composition of English poetry more or less strictly according to Greek dramatic or narrative or lyric form, with subjects and characters either borrowed from the Greek or adapted to the Greek atmosphere. The idea of this school is that the Greek literature is artistically the most perfect, and therefore English poets should imitate it. Order, beauty, truth to nature, noble conceptions of the substance and purpose of poetry, English poetry may learn from the Greek. The Victorian classicists not only studied the Greek

drama and lyric as examples of these principles of poetry, but tried to reproduce them in English. In his preface to the first edition of *Merope*, Arnold interprets the purpose of the Victorian classicists in imitating the Greek: to regulate the tendencies of Romanticism by upholding the classical standard, and to train their own composition in the classical method.

By some of his contemporaries, Arnold said, he was thought to have "an addiction to the classical school in poetry." He was quite proud of that "addiction to the classical school." And so he wrote *Merope* and a long particular preface to *Merope* (1858), explaining Greek drama to the English public, who had only a vague notion of its technical character, with a vague hope, he said, that through this "classical school" the chaos in which Romanticism had left English poetry might somehow be brought to order. Being a man of public affairs, conscious of his readers and the critics of this classical attempt, Arnold explained quite fully his purpose in writing after the manner of the Greek. The passage gives at the same time his reasons for imitation and his artistic feeling regarding Greek literary models.

"I have long had the strongest desire to attempt, for my own satisfaction, to come to closer quarters with the form which produces such grand effects in

the hands of the Greek masters, to try to obtain, through the medium of a living, familiar language, a fuller and more intense feeling of that beauty, which even when apprehended through the medium of a dead language, so powerfully affected me. . . . I desired to try, therefore, how much of the effectiveness of the Greek poetic forms I could retain in an English poem constructed under the conditions of those forms; of those forms, too, in their severest and most definite expression, in their application to dramatic poetry." He thought at first that his object could be accomplished by translation, but concluded that unless he attempted to conceive a subject for himself, he could not intensely feel it. His choice of a subject turned in favor of a theme which had been treated by Italian and French authors but not in any ultimate way. Arnold had never been satisfied with Voltaire's, or Maffei's, or Alfieri's characterization. Polyphontes had been drawn like a romantic villain, and this was not Arnold's conception of the Greek mode of characterization. To represent the persons of the play as all good or all bad detracts from the moral significance of the drama: so in characterization Arnold especially endeavored to conform to the Greek type.

In reality, however, one of Arnold's chief variations from the Greek model is in characterization, and that affects the whole development of the

drama. The story of Merope is the avenging of his father's death, by Aepytus, son of Merope and Cresphontes. The action begins with the return to Messenia of Aepytus from his rustic home, where, since the murder of his father and brothers, he has lived in secret until he should be of age to appear and restore his father's inheritance. Polyphontes, the murderer and usurper, had a secret dread of Aepytus' return, but being informed by a messenger of his death in Arcadia, went to condole with or exult over Merope. Merope's despair and Polyphontes' triumph are dramatically reversed by the coming of Aepytus, the death of Polyphontes, and the reclaiming of the throne. Storr, translator of Sophocles in the Loeb series, remarks that Merope is a far-off echo of the *Electra* of Sophocles. Certainly many circumstances of the action suggest *Electra.*

This is a typical Greek plot in which Fate should forecast and decree plainly the depth of Polyphontes and the successful return of the avenger. *Merope,* however, is not a drama of the inevitable; there is too much introspection, and consequently, suspended action. So much self-analysis of motives is not consistent with Greek tragic character. In Polyphontes' first appeal to Merope his friendliness seems very disarming:

Yes, twenty years ago this day beheld
The kind Cresphontes, thy good husband fall.
It needs no yearly offerings at his tomb
To keep alive that memory in my heart —
It lives, and while I see the light, will live.
For we were kinsmen, more than kinsmen — friends.

Then he appeals for pity and sympathy when he describes his unenviable position of ruler, always on the defensive against foes, standing now on the threshold of old age, alone. This picture of pathetic isolation should disarm Merope's vengeance, but she accuses him of murder. Then Polyphontes' speech opens the question: "Murder, but what is murder?" and Arnold's modern ethical interpretation is only too evident in Polyphontes' long self-justification.

Merope, also, is less definite, more introspective than the Greek heroine, and this characteristic becomes more marked with the development of the play. There is, for example, her wavering of decision and feeling before she commits her son to the cause of the overthrow of Polyphontes: her philosophizing over the dead body of Polyphontes about the blending of good and evil in his character. This is untrue both to her former mood and to the Greek standpoint. Her suspended moral judgment is modern, not Greek, and represents an ethical view thoroughly temperamental with Arnold.

So Arnold's method of character analysis reflects

an attitude toward moral problems certainly not modeled upon the ethics of ancient drama. Instead of the definite objective judgment of Greek drama, the stress in *Merope* is laid upon the subjective side of conduct, the motive. Therefore judgment of acts is suspended; there is an absence of moral finality. This has a most important effect upon the development of the drama.

There is a consequent lack of inevitability in the progress of the action. Fate is not the dominating power in life, over character or action, either human or divine; or the ultimate outcome, as in *Atalanta* and *Erechtheus*. This absence of a supreme controlling agent in the progress of the drama is the most conspicuous departure from the Greek mood and method. Where the Greeks would have definite forecast of the climax and the catastrophe, there is hesitation, suspense, and an unforeseen turn at the climax toward favorable fortune, for which there has been no adequate dramatic preparation. Euripides has his sudden change to favorable fortune, but prepares for it in the dramatic anticipation of the dialogue and action leading up to the climax.

Therefore in characterization (except for the minor characters, which are quite typical), in ethical significance, and development of action, *Merope* is not true to the Greek type. In other ways it is conventional, conforming to the Greek model in

general structure, in minor character, absence of obvious ornament, and subordination of imagery to moral significance and progress of action. In his ability to keep severely to the main theme, Arnold most vividly contrasts with Swinburne. Yet his expression, however direct, lucid, forward-moving, unadorned, is not specially inspired, and is sometimes marred by archaisms such as unwieldy compounds and epithets, e.g. the third strophe, spoken by Merope and the chorus, in the first choral interlude.

Arnold seriously attempted, as he explained in his preface, to reproduce the same effect in his choruses as the sound of the Greek chorus, without trying to imitate the metres, which he confessed not possible in English verse. He was least inspired in this attempt, for the choruses of *Merope* are not memorable for their lyric quality. Yet in some of the lyrics outside the drama, where Arnold was not consciously affecting the Greek, he caught a really Greek cadence. Murray quotes the passage from the chorus in *Merope* beginning:

> Much is there which the sea
> Conceals from man, who cannot plumb its depths.
> Air to his unwinged form denies a way,
> And keeps its liquid solitudes unscaled.
> Even earth, whereon he treads
> So feeble is his march, so slow,
> Holds countless tracts untrod.

Murray adds the criticism: "Now I do not say that

the thought of these verses is unpoetic or dull, or that the expression is particularly bad: but I must say that the verses seem to me, as lyrics, to have absolutely no value at all. Put them for a moment beside the "Forsaken Merman," or "Strew on her roses, roses," and see how, not only are there no metrical refinements, no polysyllabic feet, no syncope, no unstressed long syllables, but there is no trace of the first necessity of lyric — the rudimentary swing that urges you in the direction of singing. Let us turn from that song to what I conjecture to have been its original model, a chorus in the Choephoroi:

πολλὰ μὲν γα τρέφει
δεινὰ δειμάτων ἄχη

Pólla mén | gâ trefeí | deína deímatôn achê |[1]

In comparison with this, Arnold's chorus is shallow, toneless, wanting in rhythm, and in what Murray calls "metrical architecture," which none has understood but the Greek.

In *Empedocles*, Arnold leaves strictly imitative composition and freely adapts a Greek setting and a Greek physician and philosopher to the presentation of a modern theme. This subject is the burden of introspection that the nine-

[1] Murray: "What English Poetry may learn from the Greek," *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1912.

teenth century conflict of science and faith has imposed upon man. Empedocles is the Greek symbol for the troubled modern philosopher, obviously Arnold himself, who sees nothing clear in this confused doubt and belief of the mid-nineteenth century. Science has seemingly swept away the heaven and hierarchy which man has for centuries believed in, and he is suddenly thrust back upon himself, upon the limits of his own mind — an insignificant unit in an unknowable universe. From the boundaries of his own thought Empedocles recoils: the world of men, and of self only, cannot satisfy: he craves a deeper union. He appeals to nature to release him; then there will be reunion of his physical self with the physical world. The spirit, somehow, through transmigration, perhaps, or further spiritual fulfillment in other human forms, will find its destiny and unite with its own elements.

Arnold's tentative solution of Empedocles' problem inclines to the Greek, the pantheistic idea of final union with the natural elements. He finds no satisfying solution of the question of spiritual survival, and does not rest, as did the Greeks, on the human side of destiny.

His idea of self-reliance is Platonic; to know thyself is the great moral purpose of man, but Empedocles craves with the modern spirit a spiritual

evolution. It is significant that Arnold expresses so little fatalism; man's destiny is in his own keeping, for who can know that there are gods, or laws, or life beyond this? — only the immemorial past that science unfolds, and man's endless self-questioning present. Arnold could not feel, like the Greeks, the immanence of divine agents or a law binding each human act, or even in *Merope* sustain Necessity sufficiently to give the illusion of Greek dramatic development.

Callicles is the Greek element in the poem of *Empedocles*, representing beauty, sensuousness, harmony of life. His lyric interludes have all the appeal of idealized Greek existence, the music of the lyre, the drama of the gods on mystic mountain sides, myths of heroes, nymphs, and fauns. It is the lure of Greek naturalism and simple polytheism. Callicles is so mind-and-heart free to wander and sing of beautiful and storied things, — will not this beauty suffice? will not Empedocles accept this simple sensuous life? But Callicles fails to solace or charm the mind oppressed with modern problems and questioning. It is the failure of Greek naturalism to prevail over Arnold's modern skepticism. For Arnold, there is no human rest from introspection. Empedocles therefore is intensely subjective in treatment, and therefore unhellenic in theme and development.

In narrative poetry Arnold made one notable effort in the style of the Greek. *Sohrab and Rustum* relates the mortal combat of two eastern heroes, and yet the incident in its dramatic composition is very suggestive of a challenge before the walls of Troy. The treatment of the episode is Homeric and the narrative style simple, vivid, figurative, and especially marked with Homeric similes. There are passages typical of the dialogue of Homeric heroes and of their point of view; e.g.:

> For we are all, like swimmers in the sea
> Poised on top of a huge wave of fate,
> Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.

The illusion is most complete in the naïve, natural interpretation of epic character.

Of the briefer poems, *The Strayed Reveller* and *Thyrsis* have the more definite Greek character. *Thyrsis* is written in the convention of Theocritan elegy, with the illusion of shepherd character and pastoral setting adapted to Oxford environment. *The Strayed Reveller* is a free imaginative interpretation of an episode in the palace of Circe. The characters are Circe, a youth, and Ulysses; the theme, the magic of her sensuous enchantment. The fable, the characters, the figures, apostrophes, and epithets are Greek. The treatment is condensed, emotional, and the poem is developed in parts by fable and reminiscence, perhaps with a

thought of Pindar's method. The interpretation differs from *Empedocles* and *Merope* in being purely aesthetic. Moral and intellectual problems do not intrude as usual in Arnold's poetry.

In dramatic composition, therefore, Matthew Arnold is conscious of Greek models either for structure, character, and action, as in *Merope*, or for setting and characters as in *Empedocles*, or for a mythical theme as in *The Strayed Reveller*. In lyric composition he follows the vein of Greek anthology. In narrative composition his phraseology and treatment of the story are influenced by Homer. The effect of Greek upon his poetry is therefore varied, but academic, and not profound. Has his poetry the "profound seriousness" of Aristotle — "*σπουδαιότης*" — of which he frequently reminds one in his teaching of the principles of Greek poetry? Arnold's poetry never fails in seriousness, moral seriousness, but in the profound creative sense of the word "imaginative," it is not imaginatively conceived. His work was characterized by the overwhelming fault which he ascribed to the English mind of his time, calling it by various titles, strenuousness, or moral intensity, or dogmatism. Not all the "touchstones" of Greek art could suppress his tendency to moralize. This Puritan stress upon the moral is not the "profound seriousness of the Greek," by which I understand a sublimer con-

ception of truth, imaginatively presented. Except in poems of such rare inspiration as "Dover Beach" and "The Forsaken Merman," Arnold's treatment has a dogmatic vein, which we may call Philistine but not Greek. Strange that the man who wrote

> We cannot kindle when we will
> The fire which in the soul resides;
> The spirit bloweth and is still,
> In mystery our soul abides,[1]

should have left so little to the spiritual sense of his reader.

Of the other Greek ideals which Arnold taught, there are tangible effects of clearness and restraint upon his diction and imagery, qualities also expressed in his poetic architecture. Yet these are results of the study of the classics which one may find in the verse of the eighteenth-century classical school. So I think the results upon his own work of Matthew Arnold's lifelong contact with Greek literature seem profounder than they really are, because of the extent of his writing about Hellenism and of his Greek themes in poetry. This imitation of Greek drama, and composition of English verse in the Greek lyrical manner have, after all, a conventional effect. Is it not a revival of the traditional standards of the eighteenth-century classical school, but with a better understanding of the Greek

[1] Arnold: *Poems, Lyrical*, "Morality."

models due to the progress of scholarship? In the ultimate judgment, there is very little in Matthew Arnold's interpretation of the Greek in poetry which was not already stereotyped by the classical school.

II. PROSE

The Hellenism of Matthew Arnold is one of the strongholds of Victorian tradition. His critical prose was long believed to present in an enlightened and final way the true characterization of Hellenic culture and its meaning for modern life. His message had the sanctity of his Oxford fellowship and professorship, as well as of his association with his father's scholarly development of classical education at Rugby. In affairs of Hellenic criticism, Matthew Arnold's was a voice of Olympian authority, and the influence of his opinions has penetrated far beyond the circle of his academic world. Those "fearless and lucid" categories of Hellenism and Hebraism, of English society, of poetry, of religion, seem to have charted the whole intellectual world. Wherever we turn in modern criticism, we can scarcely escape his synthesis. Has the world been compelled by the power of his positive, definite, clear mode of thought to believe his interpretation of Hellenism final, or has Matthew Arnold really left us a true characterization, or made a true and

practical application of Hellenism to modern conditions? His desire to characterize Greek culture for the benefit of the public and to apply it to English problems is in itself a more practical and scientific use of Greek than other Victorian men of letters had made. This is in the spirit of the new Oxford classical movement. In this sense Matthew Arnold's critical prose belongs to the transition from the older aesthetic school to the modern scientific school of classicists. It is my object to summarize (1) Arnold's characterization of Hellenism and its historical place in the development of world culture; (2) his comparison of English and Greek culture; (3) his view of the meaning and use of Greek culture for modern England. I shall give quotations from Arnold's essays bearing on Hellenism with the résumé necessary to connect the thought.

Arnold's criticism is contemporary with the progress of the scientific movement and with the classical awakening at Oxford. The movement of Oxford reform resulted in the revision of that pre-Elizabethan curriculum which long past its day had preserved a mediaeval method in the study of the classics and a mediaeval interpretation of Hellenism. With the development of modern scholarship in the universities, the narrow conception of Greek and the picturesque, romantic interpretation of Hellenic life were to yield gradually to

more analytic studies. The movement of academic reform which began at Oxford early in the century had little opportunity to enlarge the scope of classical studies until after the theological excitement which absorbed the classical fellows and tutors between 1835 and 1850 had abated. Then the philosophical study of Greek, especially of Aristotle, began to develop, in what Reverend Mark Pattison calls the scientific period, after an era of philological study. So Matthew Arnold, as Oxford Professor of Poetry, might, in the new spirit of Oxford studies, fittingly address his university audience upon a philosophical Greek subject, the comparative tendencies of Greek civilization in the days of Pericles and of England in Victorian times, in a general way applying the tolerance, tastes, and critical spirit of the Golden Age to the modern problems of culture. "No single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in its relation to other events, to other literatures," was the underlying theme of his address.

Approaching Greece from this historical standpoint, Matthew Arnold studied the Greek literature and civilization in their evolution from epic to Periclean days, and thence to the decline. He regarded literature as the most perfect, the most adequate interpretation of an age. He analyzed Greek culture in its relation to the evolution of the culture

of the historical world. He marked "the natural current in human affairs." So the idea of cosmic evolution was moving from the scientific world to studies of culture and letters.

Arnold analyzed the value and weakness of Greek ideas in the human quest for perfection. "Their idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all sides" was a magnificent conception, but their search after perfection was a "premature attempt," for the Greeks and the human race lacked, in that phase of their development, "the moral and religious fiber" necessary to support the ideal. "The uppermost idea with Hellenism is to see things as they really are . . . the governing idea of Hellenism is spontaneity of consciousness," free play of thought, and clearness of mind. Among the Greeks the intellectual virtues were supreme and the moral virtues but "the porch and access" to the intellectual. The supreme Platonic ideal was perfect intellectual vision. "By seeing things as they are to see them in their beauty," is the simple and attractive ideal which Hellenism holds out before human nature; and from the simplicity and charm of this ideal, Hellenism and human life in the hands of Hellenism is invested with a kind of aërial ease, clearness, and radiancy; they are full of what we call "sweetness and light." But with all this intellectual light, adds Arnold, "apparently it

was the Hellenic conception of human nature which was unsound, for the world could not live by it," . . . that is, "unsound at that particular moment of man's development," it was "premature." The indispensable basis of conduct and self-control, the platform upon which alone the perfection aimed at by Greece can come into bloom, was not to be reached by our race so easily: centuries of probation and discipline were needed to bring us to it. Therefore the bright promise of Hellenism faded, and Hebraism ruled the world. "But the evolution of these forces separately and in themselves is not the whole history of man. . . . Hebraism and Hellenism are each of them contributions to human development." Humanity is greater than either of these forces, and its whole development transcends anything which civilization has yet comprehended. Surely we feel that the idea of immortality is something "grander, truer and more satisfying" than Plato's or St. Paul's conception of it.

Beyond his synthetic view of Hebraism and Hellenism as cosmic forces rises Arnold's greater conviction of the spiritual evolution of man, the power of the human spirit to develop, even beyond the intellectual grandeur of Greece and the moral passion of the Hebrews. "By alternations of Hebraism and Hellenism, of man's intellectual and moral impulses . . . the human spirit proceeds and

each of these two forces has its appointed hours of culmination and seasons of rule. . . . Now the main stream of man's advance has moved towards knowing himself and the world, seeing things as they are; . . . again the main impulse . . . has been toward strictness of conscience."

From this point Arnold applies the term "Hellenic" to periods of human development which show the scientific instinct. Humanity has renewed the Hellenic ideal wherever it has sought to perceive the truth — in nature, to find the "intelligible law of things"; in human affairs, "to give impulse to the development of the whole man," to "connecting and harmonizing the parts of him." Therefore, the Greek culture is supreme in the intellectual development of mankind: for analysis and lucid insight and free perceptions, and for its characteristic vision of the union of the true and beautiful. It is the greatest humanizing and liberating force in cosmic evolution.

From the historical analysis of Greek culture, Arnold passed to a recognition of the meaning and use of Greek culture for modern England. The English mind needs the intellectual liberation of the Hellenic ideal. Society has been mechanized by the expansion of trade and manufacture. We have a superstitious faith in machinery, and beyond present materialism we have no vision of spiritual

ends. In an epoch of expansion we are moving in chaos, rather than with an ordered ideal, when harmony of ideas is most necessary. There is plenty of moral vigor natural to the English character, of that moral passion which is one great element of culture. But what of the intellectual passion which is the other half of culture? Indeed the English mind is chiefly lacking in the intellectual passion and in vision. "The true grace and serenity is that of which Greece and Greek art suggest the admirable ideals of perfection, a serenity which comes from having made order among ideas and harmonized them." There is no harmony in the ideals of the classes of English society, no common intellectual purpose or inspiration, but "stock notions and habits of thought," mechanical, utterly unideal.

Each class has its group of vulgar-minded which stamps the class with its own petty peculiarities of thought: the middle class its Philistines, who think in terms of trade; the lower class its Populace, that irredeemable remnant at the bottom of the intellectual scale; the aristocracy its Barbarians, who live for muscular energy and do not think at all. "We need to rise above the idea of class to the idea of the whole community, the state, and to find our center of light and authority there." In this Platonic Republic of ideas we should find har-

monious intellectual standards inspiring and elevating all classes and groups, for the common purpose of culture. From the Greeks we may learn liberation of the mind from "routine notions," harmonious union of the moral and intellectual life, curiosity for the truth, and "perception that the truth of things must be at the same time beauty," lucid analysis of human affairs according to rational judgment. These are Hellenic ideals which profoundly need to be applied to English intellectual conditions.

Building upon these needs in English life, he closes his social and political criticism with faith that the reconstruction of English culture will certainly come through the influence of Hellenic forces. "But we are sure that the endeavor to reach, through culture, the firm intelligible law of things, we are sure that detaching ourselves from our stock notions and habits, that a more free play of consciousness, an increased desire for sweetness and light, and all the bent which we call Hellenizing, is the master impulse even now of the life of our nation and of humanity, somewhat obscurely perhaps for this actual moment, but decisively and certainly for the immediate future; and that those who work for this are the sovereign educators." Reconstructing our habits of thought, renewing our understanding of culture, entering upon our Hellenic

quest for truth and human perfection, we shall arrive at a revolution of our social and political system, — how magically will the social and political system adjust itself! Indeed transformation of thought rather than practical reform was his aim. When England adopts the great humanistic ideals of Greece, the details of political reform will rationally solve themselves! We are to begin with the lofty idea of the state as the intellectual center, and lift all classes to an intelligent vision and higher level of culture. "Intellectual deliverance is the demand of modern ages." "The literature of ancient Greece is even for modern times a mighty agent for intellectual deliverance."

In criticism he insisted upon an objective standard of judgment, based upon his Hellenic conception of poetry, its aims and qualities. We should require of a poem an interpretation of life which shall bring us magically near the truth, the essential nature of the object. We should require that it conform to the laws of truth and beauty in its style as well as its substance, as a test bringing it to the threshold of the great classics where it may be tried by the traditional laws of truth and beauty. Certain lines from Homer and the dramatists are great "touchstones" of artistic quality in literature.

In this brief form I think that Arnold's message can be adequately summarized, although his dis-

cussion of Hellenism extends over many essays. In all the volumes, there are the same recurring phrases, the same stress, the same definitions which are familiar to a generation bred on *Culture and Anarchy* and *Essays in Criticism*. Most aptly Murray says, "One knows where to have him and where to challenge him." I find I cannot let the sacred tradition of Matthew Arnold's Hellenism and Hellenic temperament go unchallenged. His characterization of Hellenism is limited by a lack of historical knowledge and by lack of imagination. It is the frequent error of the synthetic thinker that he shapes the world to fit his categories. In such a way I feel that Arnold has fitted Hellenism to the text of his sermon on the English mind or culture. His conceptions of Hellenism and Hebraism are rigid, wanting in that very Greek flexibility which he desired for himself and his contemporaries. Moreover, the lack of imagination is evident not only in his conceptions, but in his treatment of his theme. A rigid manner of presentation mars the development of his theme; indeed the theme fails to develop beyond a narrow, limited sphere of exposition. Then one meets the same phrases, the same categories, like barriers of liberal expansion. The Greek rhetoricians, however clear in articulation, and arrangement of formal heads, were never so wanting in subtlety and art.

Arnold's biographers are wont to describe him as Hellenic in mind and temperament, but he should be characterized as the type of his own generation; however cultivated in liberal Oxford letters, in his fundamental mode of thought he was a man of middle-class English mind, with those very routine ideas which he relegated to the Philistines. Even Hellenism with Arnold becomes a "stock notion and habit." His mental processes are lacking in that very freedom which he seeks from the Greeks. Is there "spontaneity," is there "free play of consciousness" in *Culture and Anarchy* and *St. Paul and Protestantism?* His service to Hellenism is not as the prophetic interpreter of Greek culture, but as an educator who insisted upon the knowledge of Greek. He was an advocate of fearless and positive convictions and of clear, definite expression; and his insistence upon the educational value of Greek in order to liberalize the minds, the tastes, the culture and character of the English established Greek in education with new authority, meaning and purpose. But the influence of Matthew Arnold on classical education is another subject.

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